ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation:	WHICH TEAM DO YOU PLAY FOR?: VISIBILITY AND QUEERING IN BRAZILIAN SOCCER
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Abstract:

Brazilians designate their country "*O País de Futebol*" (The Country of Football) with a singular vigor. But from its earliest years, the sport has been defined along masculine lines; women in Brazil were actually banned from playing soccer for four decades (1940 - 1979). The exclusion of women, gay men, and trans athletes has come under considerable challenge in the past two decades. This dissertation traces how marginalized groups have claimed access to soccer, and what it means for processes of visibility, assimilation, and ultimately, queering the game itself. Combining ethnographic, archival, and visual methods, the project unfolds over three case studies focused on women, trans, and gay players, respectively. The first chapter presents a history of Brazilian women's soccer: using media sources and interviews, it tracks tensions between women athletes' demands to be seen and the gendered

forms of disciplining that have accompanied their increased visibility. Such disciplining has contributed to the whitening and feminization of women's soccer, as seen in the case of the Paulistana tournament, and to the subsequent migration of Brazil's top athletes. These migrant players have since used their transnational networks to jockey for recognition and a more equitable distribution of resources. My second chapter offers an ethnography of Brazil's first trans men's soccer team, the Brazilian *Meninos Bons de Bola* (MBB, or Soccer Star Boys), to explore *futebol* as a site for combating invisibility and violence, creating transness, and queer worldmaking. Using a combination of focus groups, ethnographic observations, and interviews, I explore how team members theorize oppression, survive transphobia, and thrive. My third chapter analyzes the challenges facing the Brazilian BeesCats, a cis gay men's soccer team, as they form the first Brazilian contingent to participate in the international Gay Games. Drawing from ethnographic data from the 2018 Paris Gay Games, I examine the ethnosexual frontiers of this international LGBT sporting event. Ultimately, I argue, the athletes described in this dissertation make claims on their national sport as part of deeper struggles for belonging. In the context of a culturally rightward turn in Brazil, they are also queering futebol and subverting gender ordering.

WHICH TEAM DO YOU PLAY FOR?
VISIBILITY AND QUEERING IN BRAZILIAN SOCCER

by

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Dedication

Την αφιερώνω σε εσένα, Αντωνάκη μου

And to my querida familia: Loretta, Will, Julia, James, Ruby, Nathaniel, Avi, Εύη, και Κορνήλιος

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List of Abbreviations

CBF	Confederação Brasileira de Futebol
FIFA	Fédération Internationale de Football Association
FPF	Federação Paulistana de Futebol
GG	Gay Games
MBB	Meninos Bons de Bola
SPFC	São Paulo Futebol Club
SUS	Sistema Único de Saúde
WWC	FIFA Women's World Cup

Introduction:

Gendered Order and Progress in the Nation of Soccer

"Futebol me salvou? Salvou!"
(*"Did soccer save me? It saved me!"*)
-Raphael Henrique Martins, Founder and captain of the *Meninos Bons de Bola,*
Brazil's first trans men's soccer team (What's App, 4/15/2019)

The devotion to *futebol* (soccer or football) in Brazil borders on religious worship. It saves and it condemns. From international games to local competitions, futebol is a way for Brazilians to articulate national identity as they cheer and play. Brazilians designate their country "*O País de Futebol*" (The Country of Football) with a singular vigor, and perhaps more than any other soccer-playing nation. This love of the national sport is felt in ways both monumental and mundane. When the Brazilian men's team won the FIFA World Cup in 1958, for instance, fans regarded their victory as God smiling on Her favorite nation. When they lost, as in the most recent men's World Cup in Russia, it was interpreted as a manifestation of the nation's decline.

The association between nation and futebol was created in Brazil in part through the combined efforts of intellectual and political elites across the twentieth century. Brazilian leaders, in dialogue with European ones, turned to futebol as a way to articulate modernity and nationhood. While there is a considerable body of soccer

history that traces this process, this dissertation focuses on the gendered dimensions of this association between nation and futebol.[1] Soccer was defined early in its history as the exclusive domain of men. In Brazil, even as futebol became central to national identity, a large number of Brazilians were simultaneously excluded from this form of belonging. The exclusions of women, gay men, and more recently trans people, have come under considerable challenge in the past two decades. *Which Team Do You Play For?* traces the process by which excluded groups have claimed access to soccer, and

[1] Literature on the history of Brazilian soccer provides insight into how, from their inception, both "modern" Brazilian nationhood and soccer were gendered as well as raced (Gordon and Helal 2002; Nadel 2004; Bocketti 2016). The scholarship on women's soccer, is, however, sparse. For example, none of these more recent books on soccer devote even a chapter to women: Paulo Fontes and Thiago Buarque de Hollanda, *The Country of Football: Politics, Popular Culture and the Beautiful Game in Brazil*, (London: Hurst & Company, 2014); David Goldblatt, *Futebol Nation: The Story of Brazil through Soccer*, (New York: Nation Books 2014); *The Country of Football: Soccer and the Making of Modern Brazil,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).The first monograph about women's soccer in Latin America is Brenda Elsey's and Joshua Nadel's *Futbolera: A History of Women and Sports in Latin America*, which was published in 2019. It is a much-needed corrective to the masculinist bibliography of Latin American football studies, and this dissertation draws extensively on their two chapters about Brazilian *Futebol Feminino.*

what this means both for processes of visibility, assimilation, and ultimately, queering the game itself.

The most explicit and longstanding exclusion has been that forced on women; women in Brazil were actually banned from playing soccer for several decades. The prohibition against *futebol feminino* (women's soccer), which lasted from 1940-1979, came during a period when leaders worked concertedly to consolidate Brazilian national identity. In the early twentieth century, at the same time that *futebol masculino* (men's soccer) became a tool in the project of nation building, futebol feminino was also growing in popularity. Fearing that the women's sport threatened to unravel the nascent nation's fragile social bonds, male politicians and "medical experts"–who claimed futebol put women's reproductive capacities at risk–colluded to legislate the ban in an effort to disappear women's participation. This ban was especially aimed at controlling the bodies of upper-class white women; according to eugenic logics, national policy makers focused on these women for their role in reproducing "desirable" Brazilianness. At local and regional levels, women, and especially working class women, continued to play, but the prohibition essentially drove futebol feminino underground for nearly forty years.

The ban's attempt at invisibilizing women's soccer also coincided with the rise of visual technologies, particularly photography. Magazines of the late 1920s like *Revista Feminista* that featured pieces about women's sport and "physical culture" also exhibited a global trend towards photojournalism that paired image and text

(Bocketti 2016, 171; Burgi 2015).[2] Sports publications alone grew from "fewer than ten in 1912 to over sixty in 1930" (Elsey and Nadel 2019, 67), and as people read more magazines and newspapers, they were exposed to more images of sportspersons. This proliferation of photographs emphasized the idealization of bodies of athletes, and an idealization that enforced binary gender norms. A major element undergirding the fear of futebol feminino, then, was the idea that it masculinized women, often in apparent ways such as building muscle. Women athletes—both their existence and their visual representations—endangered binary configurations of gender that defined masculinity and femininity in opposition. The figure of female futebolista was, by definition, queer, in that she distorted the rigid distinctions between the sexes that futebol sought to solidify.

Blurred lines between femininity and masculinity threatened orderly gender relations, and these were connected to social order, more broadly. In the early 1900s (and arguably to this day), conservatives read disruptions in the gender binary as

[2] Moving pictures took off in mid twentieth century and had a role in maintaining the ban. In 1950, Brazilian media tycoon Assis Chateubriand inaugurated the first Brazilian television station, named Tupi. During the military regime (1964 - 1985) television became widespread across social classes and a profitable enterprise. National broadcasting began in the 1970s (it was local before then), but it was only in 2000 that a national public network was established. Today "almost the entire population fo 190 million people has access to television" according to historian Esther Hamburger (Hamburger 2019, 370)

social chaos. For example, a conservative magazine called *A Ordem* (The Order), published a treatise in 1937 that underscored the moral panic surrounding perceived gender and sexual subversion. The treatise harps on the "moral crisis in modern society," resulting from a "weakening of customs" brought on by gender deviance, which was evinced in the "spectacle of effeminate men...and the masculinization of women" (Cowan 2016, 29). To disrupt gendered order was to disrupt order, writ large. Given the centrality of futebol masculino to Brazilian identity, and given the aspiration of nation builders towards "*ordem e progresso*" (or "order and progress," the motto enshrined in Brazil's national flag since 1889), the ruling class fretted over preserving futebol's masculinity.

Designating futebol as a *coisa de macho*, a man's game, implied other exclusions, as well. Governing elites built the sport not just along masculine lines, but heteromasculine ones and in contemporary terms, cis masculine ones. Although policy makers used futebol's supposedly masculinizing influences to justify women's exclusion, they used this same reason to encourage men's participation, especially to counter what conservative thinkers referred to as the feminizing effects of modernity and liberalism (Cowan 2016, 28). Still, futebol provided many opportunities for homoeroticism as players engaged in close physical contact on and off the field. In spite of (or perhaps because of) futebol masculino's queering potential, football clubs, together with the media, made efforts to shore up the sport's heterosexuality. One way they did this was to channel the interactions between male players and women fans. Newspapers in the 1920s featured pieces on the best looking woman fan, which simultaneously marked futebol as a heterosexual space and made clear what they

thought women's place should be on the pitch (Elsey and Nadel 2019, 71). Unofficial measures to reify futebol's heterosexuality included shaming and other forms of everyday homophobia. That no professional male soccer player in Brazil has come out as gay points to the continued and very real effects of such shaming.[3]

In effect, the history of Brazilian futebol—from the late 1800s when the sport arrived in Brazil to 1979 when the women's soccer ban was overturned—is one of a concerted and multifaceted effort by those in power to exclude women and LGBT+ athletes from the national sport. However, opportunities for marginalized queer athletes began to shift significantly in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. [4] For women, it was the international platform of the 1996 Olympics, the first iteration of the Games to include women's soccer, that sparked a change (Rial 2014). The first LGBT+ identified team formed in São Paulo in 2015 and the number of such teams has grown exponentially since then; as of 2018, there were over forty-two futebol teams comprised exclusively of cis gay men. Because futebol is synonymous with Brazil, these athletes' battles for inclusion represent deeper struggles for belonging. The undertaking by formerly excluded to claim this sport, and in turn queer it, forms the core of my exploration.

With this legacy of exclusions in mind, I set out to investigate the following questions: what is the history of the effort by women, gay men, and trans men to

[3] The world over very few professional sportsmen identify openly as gay.

[4] I include women of all sexualities in the group "queer athletes" since the figure of female futebolista is intrinsically non-normative.

claim futebol? My dissertation tracks the rise of queer futebol in this contemporary moment in Brazil, asking: What are the implications of articulating demands for access to the national sport along the lines of visibility? What, specifically, are people seeking when they seek visibility? Why do marginalized players desire to be seen, and what are the perils? As marginalized athletes enter and queer the national sport, what are the limits and possibilities they encounter, and what happens when they encounter these? To pursue these questions, I conducted ethnographic fieldwork, interviews, and focus groups, between 2017 and 2019 in multiple sites and via remote digital means. I conducted the majority of my interviews about futebol feminino in the city of São Paulo in 2017, and in both 2017 and 2019 I did fieldwork there with the *Meninos Bons de Bola,* Brazil's first transexual men's soccer team.[5] I also attended the 2018 Paris Gay Games and conducted ethnographic research with the BeesCats, the first cis gay men's soccer team from Brazil to compete in the Games. Between trips, I communicated with players via WhatsApp and occasionally on Skype and Facebook. I also studied visual images in magazine, newspapers, and social media (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram), reading these to understand how players navigate binaries and negotiate visibility. I discuss my methods in more detail in each chapter.

The Legal, Economic and Political Landscape of Brazilian Futebol (1996 – Present)

[5] "Transexual men" is the term the MBB team uses to describe themselves. In chapter two, I discuss the politics of such naming.

The time span covered in this dissertation runs from 1996, a decade after Brazil began transitioning to democracy following a twenty-one year period of military rule from 1964-1985, to 2019, when sweeping changes were afoot. Understanding the political, legal and economic landscape of this post-transition period provides context for the rise of queer futebol. A fundamental component of the move from military dictatorship to democracy is Brazil's 1988 constitution. The Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil, referred to as the 'Citizens' Constitution' (Schwarcz and Starling 2019, 580), is celebrated among human rights activists. In its wake, law makers have passed codes protecting Afro-Brazilians, consumers, and children, among other groups. The constitution paved the path for debates about equal rights "affirming the rights of all citizens within a context of social inequality, all the while incorporating new, individualized rights for the equal treatment of minority groups" including LGBT+ identified Brazilians (580).

According to constitutional procedure stipulating direct elections of executive and congressional representatives, Fernando Collor de Mello became President of the Republic in 1989. Although Mello campaigned on an anti-corruption platform, he was found to be involved in a massive corruption scandal, having accepted large sums of money in exchange for political influence. Impeachment proceedings began, and Mello resigned only a year into his presidency. Vice-President Itamar Franco then assumed the Presidency in 1992 amidst economic turmoil and rampant inflation. Franco appointed Fernando Henrique Cardoso, a left-leaning sociologist who had lived in exile during the dictatorship, to be his foreign affairs minister and then finance minister. Together with a team of economists, Cardoso's plan and creation of

a new currency (the *real*) curtailed inflation. Largely credited with Brazil's economic stability, Cardoso easily won the presidential election of 1994 (Schwarcz and Starling 2019, 581; Green, Langland, and Schwarcz 2019, 499).

Once in the executive office, Cardoso assumed a centrist stance. His two terms were simultaneously marked by neoliberal privatization of previously state-owned companies and by social measures that redistributed wealth. These measures—which were crafted in partnership with first lady and anthropologist Dr. Ruth Cardoso—included providing benefits to poor families to keep their children in school, creating food grants, and eliminating child labor. In addition to curbing inflation and initiating social programs, Cardoso restructured government funds and invested in public sector jobs, leading to economic growth. He was also one of the founders of the Brazilian Social Democrat Party (PSDB) (Schwarcz and Starling 2019, 581).

Following Cardoso's two terms, Luis Ignacio da Silva (Lula) was elected President of Brazil in 2002. Lula represents many "firsts": he was born in the country's Northeast to an illiterate mother, he was the first President from a working class background, and he rose to power as a union leader. The Workers' Party (PT) that he represented and helped create began in the 1970s under the dictatorship. Once in power, the PT passed sweeping redistributive legislation that reduced poverty, directly redistributed wealth, and strengthened workers' rights. During Lula's time in office, Brazil became the fifth largest economy in world (after the US, China, Japan and Germany) and was designated one of the rising BRIC superpowers.

In the 2000s Brazil hosted a series of sport mega-events that confirmed its status on the world stage. It was during Lula's presidency that seeds were sown for a series of sporting spectacles including the Confederations Cup in 2013, the men's World Cup in 2014, the Summer Olympic and Paralympic games in August and September of 2016. When Brazil won the bidding process in to host the Summer Olympics in Rio—66 votes for Rio to 34 for Madrid—Lula shared:

> They could see in our eyes that we were the only ones that really wanted to do this. We put our hearts and souls in it. For them it would just be another one. Today is a day for celebration, because Brazil has left behind the level of second-class countries and entered the ranks of first-class countries. Respect is good, and we like to be respected. Today we earned respect. Reason, passion, and truth prevailed. Brazil deserved to host the Olympic games. The world finally recognized that this is the time for Brazil. [. . .] Brazil conquered its 'absolute' citizenship. The world no longer doubts the grandiosity of the country (Da Silva qtd in Rossone de Paula 2018, 113)

Indeed, thousands watched a live broadcast of the results at Copacabana beach and celebrated when these came in. Brazil's reaction to their victory signals that its significance goes beyond the right to organize a mega event: it "was considered by many a victory for Brazilian self-esteem, as defeating other global powers in the bid process had a symbolic meaning" (De Almeida et. al 2014, 77).

The change in public feelings about these sport mega-events reflect important shifts in political mood: from optimistic to angry. If the celebratory atmosphere surrounding Brazil's era of mega events captured a material and affective high point in the 2000s, the increasingly negative opinions about these events in the 2010s signaled a shift. In 2010, PT candidate Dilma Rousseff was elected President, becoming the first woman in Brazil to hold this position. After Rousseff took office, however, political and economic tides changed in stark ways. In 2012 an economic

downturn began, partly in response to global falls in important commodity prices (Green, Langland and Schwarcz 2019, 501). Shortly after, massive protests broke out. These 2013 demonstrations initiated in São Paulo in response to a spike in bus fares, and they sparked other protests that erupted across the country. Referred to as the *manifestações de Junho* (the June protests), the marchers denounced the rising costs of transportation, inadequate health and education programs, and excessive expenditures on preparing stadiums for the World Cup.

In many ways, the protests began as a broad-based social rights movement. According to Lilia M. Schwarcz and Heloisa M. Starling:

> The June Protests made it clear that the period of re-democratization was over. It was now a question of taking a step towards strengthening Brazil's public institutions and expanding its democracy - which includes new claims for gender, sexual, ethnic, regional and generational equality. This is the only path to full citizenship. One of the greatest recent developments has been the demand for civil rights, for the 'right to be different', defended by movements of feminists, black people, *quilombolas* and members of the LGBT community. For many Brazilians, citizenship is no longer defined by the right to equality, but includes the right to be different within that equality (2019, 584).

But coalitions of leftist groups began to lose power as the demonstrations continued. In March 2014, amidst a massive corruption scandal referred to as the *Lava Jato* (the Car Wash), stark political divisions arose within the protests.

The *Lava Jato* scheme involved billions of dollars and large networks of people. It was headed by the leaders of Petrobras (the nationally-owned oil company), sixteen of Brazil's largest construction companies (who formed a cartel), and the country's five main political parties (PMDB, PP, PSD, PT, PSDB) (Schwarcz and Starling 2019, 594). Politicians, business people and public servants at many levels were also implicated. The breadth and depth of corruption that the scandal revealed

rocked the country. Although numerous parties were incriminated, the PT received the brunt of the hate, especially from a growing force of rightwing conservatives, some of whom were even in favor of a return to military rule. Rousseff was re-elected months later (October 2014) by a slim margin as the political and economic crisis deepened.

As the accusations of corruption continued, unemployment increased, Congress boycotted Rousseff's initiatives, and vice-president Michel Temer publicly vied to take over. The list of crises—including the Fundão dam environmental disaster, the Zika virus outbreak, and the defeat of Brazil's *seleção masculino* in their own country's World Cup—continued alongside ever more polarized protests. An opposition coalition pounced on the moment to seize power. This opposition coalition accused Rousseff of 'fiscal pedaling,' which is an administrative move (used also by administrations prior to Rousseff's) where the government delays payment to artificially inflate finances. On this basis, oppositional forces removed the president from office in August 2016, via an impeachment procedure that Rousseff refers to as a 'constitutional coup' (Rousseff 2017).

It is in this climate of division and chaos that the Meninos Bons de Bola and the LiGay come into existence and that Emily Lima, the first woman coach of the *seleção feminina,* was hired and fired. Amidst pervasive corruption, unstable governance, and rising tides of hate, the athletes' demands for greater participation are part of a longer-term trend in which marginalized groups are claiming belonging in the national polity. They might also be a response to disappointment with electoral politics and a turn to claiming political and social dignity through other means. As I

found throughout my research process, the athletes were remarkably reticent to speak about national politics and rarely identified with specific parties. Instead, they viewed their struggle as one against deep-seated social and cultural norms that both the left- and right-leaning parties upheld. The queer athletes in this dissertation are unified in a particular struggle and solidarity. Their existence is proof that the country's move in the 2000s and early 2010s towards rights-based-claims continues, in channels such as futebol.

The Promise and Perils of Visibility

Given the history of the invisibilization of women and LGBT+ athletes, it is not enough for them to simply play futebol, they must be seen doing it. Notably, each of these marginalized groups have framed their fight for inclusion in terms of visibility. For instance, in 2015 the *Museu do Futebol* (The Football Museum) in São Paulo featured their first exhibition dedicated to *futebol feminino* and they called it *Visibility of Women's Football* (Elsey and Nadel 2019, 61). The founders of both the *Meninos Bons de Bola* (the protagonists of my second chapter), and the *BeesCats* (the athlete-activists in my third chapter), have also named *visibilidade*, visibility, as their primary reason for creating these LGBT+-identified teams.

The desire to be seen is, in part, a corrective to historical erasures. Each group has been obscured: cis women experienced a forty-year ban, trans men have confronted invisibility in general and within LGBT+ communities, and cis gay futebolistas have played their professional careers in the closet. Demanding to be seen is about more than being visualized in public settings and media. The struggle for a

viable professional *futebol feminino*, and for the existence of amateur LGBT+ identified leagues, also orbit around this nebulous concept of visibility.

Visibility, when examined in this context, generates processes of recognition, impositions of discipline, and creations of spectacle. Each of these effects of visibility are not mutually exclusive. In the case of women's soccer, players and supporters advocate for the visibility of futebol feminino, exemplified in the 2015 exhibition at the *Museu do Futebol* dedicated to women's football. Visibility, in this instance, is an enabling process of social recognition. Scholars such as Andrea Mubi Brighenti attribute this form of being seen to a Hegelian understanding whereby "the existence of the human being is constituted through mutual recognition" (Brighenti 2010, 45). In this relational and social understanding of the term, invisibility, especially for groups that are marginalized like LGBT+ athletes, means being deprived of recognition. Such recognition in futebol also leads to redistribution, counter to some political theorists' claims that the increase in identity-based activism necessarily indicates a decline in egalitarian, redistributive claims (Fraser 2000). In the example of the *Museu do Futebol* above, demands for the visibility of *futebol feminino* insist on institutional reconfigurations that redistribute resources towards the woman's sport. The powerful class that controls futebol's governing structures often use invisibility as a tool, as when making decisions out of the public eye or when determining the conditions for being seen. Athletes and activists, who have a clear vision of the interlocking forces oppressing players and teams who are considered marginal, use visibility to make redistributive demands.

But visibility also leaves players exposed to the perils of surveillance and disciplining. For instance, the coaches and managers of privately-owned clubs, who operate without oversight, ponder over what forms of visibility will draw the gaze of fans. Or marketers seek visibility *en route* to profit, often using questionable or objectifying visuals to "sell" the sport. Visibility as a form of discipline, in Foucauldian terms, implies surveillance and involves self-regulation by those being observed (1975). Being seen, in this case, leads to subjugation. Applied to futebol, club owners and sponsors often seek to control the image of athletes, disciplining their gendered bodies and performances to conform to binary understandings. Conversely, LGBT+ athletes also control their own bodily image and comportment, code switching as they seek acceptance from different audiences, as I describe in chapter two.

In another example of its multifaceted quality, visibility can also generate spectacles that obscure truths about teams. In each of my chapters, I examine how media and marketing representations create dramatic stories that highlight specific aspects of the teams at the expense of issues that matter to players. In chapter one, I focus on how the effort of clubs to commodify women's futebol and attract television audiences led to aestheticizing women soccer players. In chapter two, I describe how trans futebolistas rue the fact that media stories stress the physical violence that they experience as if it is the only story that matters. In chapter three, I describe gay male players showing a canny awareness of how different media outlets —one more conservative than the other— will relay their sexuality in differing ways. I also note how marginalized players use spectacle for their own purposes: in chapter two, I note

that trans players use media spectacle to generate support and increase awareness of trans lives and subjectivities. Considering how interpretations of visibility differ, and how the term visibility is deployed to achieve dissimilar goals, there are multiple stories about seeing, being seen, and making seen to be told.

To make sense of the (mis)recognition of diverse football players and their place within Brazil, I turn to social theorist Andrea Brighenti's understandings of "regimes of visibility". Arguing for visibility as a field of study, Brighenti presents it "as a phenomenon that is inherently ambiguous, highly dependent upon contexts and complex social, technical and political arrangements which could be termed 'regimes' of visibility" (2010, 3). Visibility, according to Brighenti, is "relational, strategic and processual, or better, 'evental'" (39). Visibility is relational because seeing and being seen creates and defines relationships. It is through such relationships, Brighenti asserts, that subject positions are determined. The reality that getting noticed is a means to different ends in LTBT+ futebol and futebol feminino speaks to the second point that visibility is strategic: manipulating what and how things are seen has real social effects. These "deep[ly] ambivalen[t]" effects, that "swing between recognition [and] control," depend on "the interplay of…sites, subjects, events and rhythms," which is what Brighenti means by evental (39). Tracing the relationship between futebol and visibility, I explore such "regimes of visibility" for what they reveal about transnational and intersectional configurations of gender in Brazil.[6]

[6] I invoke the term "intersectional" to signal the ways gender is always determined in relation to other categories including race, class, sexuality, nationality, and ability.

Research Trajectory

It was through an event hosted by the *Museu do Futebol* as part of their campaign to increase the visibility of futebol feminino that my dissertation project unfolded as it did. On July 20, 2017, the *Museu* sponsored a bus from the Pacaembu stadium where the museum is housed, to the *Arena Barueri* (an hour away), where the women's soccer final, a match between Corinthians and Santos, would be held. *Museu* staff invited anyone from the public to come, and the match was free and open to the public, as well. I was there to support their campaign and to seek research contacts on women's soccer. Also on the bus were about twenty staff from the *Museu,* one Corinthians fan, and three founding members of the *Meninos Bons de Bola* (MBB), Brazil's first transexual men's (the term they use) soccer team with three of their nephews: we are pictured (FIG 0.1) in front of the Museum-Stadium holding a sign that reads "O Museu do Futebol Apoia a Visibilidade Para o Futebol Feminino" (or, "The Football Museum Supports Visibility for Women's Soccer"). In this way, it was through my research on *futebol feminino* that I was introduced to Brazil's first trans-identified team.

FIG 0.1 “The Football Museum Supports Visibility for Women’s Soccer,” July 20, 2017. Photo Credit: Cara K. Snyder

When I encountered the MBB, I had been in São Paulo for three weeks, completing ethnographic research that would explore the whitening and feminization of the *seleção feminina* (the Brazilian Women’s National Soccer Team), which is the topic of my first chapter. My original intentions were to interview black and gender nonconforming players who had been excluded from a women’s soccer tournament in 2001 (the *Paulistana*). But meeting the *meninos* on that bus expanded the scope of my project. The first and only player I was able to speak with that was excluded from the 2001 *Paulistana* was Raphael H. Martins (Rapha), the creator and captain of the MBB. He was one of those denied access to that tournament when he played as a woman, likely for not conforming to the selectors’ gendered and racial criteria, apart from their performance standards. Although he now identifies as a trans man, Rapha’s

experience raised questions about how gender nonconforming athletes navigate Brazil's rigid gender binaries.

In navigating binaries, the MBB are not only queering gender; they are also queering futebol, which I explore in chapter two.[7] Their team challenges gender binaries by refusing to classify within athletic categorization of female or male. But they are also queering soccer by refusing to make competition and winning their goal, and by instead aiming at building worlds and communities. While members of the team vary in terms of their personal objectives for participating, the vast majority are there to be part of a community of trans people. The MBB's primary mission, as stated officially in reports and grant applications and unofficially by players sharing what the team means to them, is to bring together trans men. Players have said over and over again, that before they became a part of the team, they felt isolated and misunderstood. For many, participation in the MBB is a powerful affirmation of trans masculine existence and identity. But beyond creating worlds for themselves, the MBB aim to increase the visibility of trans men, especially in (supposedly) LGBT+ spaces where they feel the invisibility of trans men is particularly troubling.

It was with the goal of visibility in mind that the MBB made heroic efforts to participate in the 2018 Paris Gay Games. Despite their attempts to raise funds,

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[7] Here I am defining queer as an action, and as resistant to heteronormativity, according to scholarship about the definitions of queer/cuir in the Latin Americas (Vidal-Ortiz, Viteri and Amaya 2014).

however, they were unable to secure the money necessary to make it to Paris.[8] Still, I was able to follow the BeesCats, a cis gay men's team from Rio de Janeiro, who were the first delegation from Brazil to compete in football in the Gay Games. The Gay Games and Cultural Events are akin to the Olympic Games, and are the most well-known LGBT amateur sporting competition, multi-day athletic and cultural festival. Like the MBB, the BeesCats formed a cis gay soccer team not only out of their love of the national pastime but also because they hoped to raise awareness about the existence of queer masculinities in futebol.

Chapter Outlines

Chapter one recounts the tensions between women's efforts to enter futebol and the sporting patriarchs' efforts to control the terms of women's entry. It focuses on two *Paulistana* women's football tournaments (1997 and 2001), where managers and marketers sought to popularize futebol feminino by subjecting athletes to racialized and gender-conformist beauty regimes. The expansion of televisual technologies in this period coincided with an emphasis on maintaining a binary gender order via the physical appearance of athletes. One result of the visible whitening and feminization of futebol feminino was the migration of Brazil's top athletes, who moved for reasons both cultural and financial. Abroad, futebolistas form

[8] It would have been necessary to raise around $17,500.00 USD. The Games cost and estimated $2,500 per player--including room, board, and registration--multiplied by seven players, the minimum necessary to compete in seven-side football.

transnational feminist solidarities as they jockey for rights and recognition in and out of Brazil.

Chapter two studies the case of the *Meninos Bons de Bola*, who also seek visibility via the national sport. I begin by focusing on media representations, and closely examining the role of violence in constructing a soccer-as-savior narrative. The *meninos* want to be seen, in the hopes that broadcasting their stories will fight the invisibility that they feel contributes to anti-trans violence. But two years after their formation, and after dozens of films and articles have been made and written about the MBB, many *meninos* are disillusioned with the decontextualized spectacle their narrative became. Still, the MBB's visibility has achieved many of their desired goals: namely, it has acted as a homing device for other trans men, and in this way the futebol team is a site for constructing transness. Through focus group conversations, I excavate a richer sense of how futebol shapes and is shaped by the MBB's struggles around gendering and queering.

I ask similar questions around gendering and queering in chapter three, as I follow a cis gay men's futebol team, the BeesCats, to the 2018 Paris Gay Games. Using the high-profile of this international context, these athlete-activists make visible the existence of gay futebolistas to different audiences in and out of Brazil. I observe how the BeesCats adjust their performances of gender and sexuality as they fight for acceptance in and through futebol.

Together, the case studies in this dissertation track how women and LGBT+ athletes are advocating for deeper forms of recognition and belonging through futebol, the national sport of Brazil. Seeking acceptance through futebol is an

assimilative move. At the same time, the presence and politics of women, trans men, and cis gay men athletes queers the sport by challenging its cis heteromasculinity. But demanding visibility by way of the national sport comes at a price. As players change futebol they are also changed by it through the disciplining pressures of hegemonic understandings of masculinity and femininity, eugenic logics of beauty, and binary modes of competition. *Which Team Do You Play For?* explores such moves and tradeoffs.

Chapter Two: Feminizing Futebol

FIG. 1.1 1996 Olympic Games. Atlanta, USA. Sanford Stadium, Georgia. Photo Credit: Bob Thomas/Getty Images

FIG. 1.2 2016 Olympic Games. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Photo Credit: Xinhua News Agency/Foottheball.com https://www.foottheball.com/tournaments/rio-olympics/rio-2016-brazil-womens-football-team-sees-tough-rival-in-china/180334

Two photographs of the Brazilian women's national soccer team, taken sixteen years apart, reveal important shifts in this sport in Brazil.[9] The first photo, Fig. 1.1, taken in Atlanta, USA, 1996, captures the first appearance of women's soccer at the Olympics. These international games also mark the moment when Brazilian women athletes made a significant and public return to the soccer fields (Rial 2014). In this image, six players stand in the back row, while in the front row, five players kneel on one knee in a pose common to men's soccer team photos. All but two players have short, almost shaved, dark, tightly curled hair. Nine of these eleven players would be identified as "Afro-Brazilian" by census measures. Two players are smiling. The second photograph, Fig.1.2, shows the 2016 Brazilian team at the Olympics in Rio de Janeiro. Five players stand in the back, and six players stand in front of them, slightly bent at the waist, with their hands on their knees in a more conventionally feminine pose. In contrast to the first image, all but one of the players have long hair, which all but three have straightened. The team is visibly lighter skinned. Players do not appear sweaty, and some appear to be wearing makeup. All are smiling.

The differences between these two pictures suggest that a regime of gender-conformist beautification has changed Brazilian women's soccer. In the twenty years

[9] I will use the terms soccer, football, and *futeból*, as well as women's soccer and *futebol feminino,* interchangeably. When referring to the Brazilian women's national/Olympic team, I will also use the Portuguese term *seleção.*

between the first and second picture, the sport's internationalization has moved futebol feminino (women's soccer in Brazil) out of the margins into a highly visible mainstream. By 2016, the disciplining pressure of Eurocentric beauty norms has affected how not only how soccer players look and pose, but even the racial composition of the national team. Specifically, a regime of aestheticizing soccer that has accompanied the modalities' increased visibility has meant not only its feminization but also its whitening. Juxtaposing the two photos raises troubling questions about the racial and gendered underpinnings of beauty standards in commercial sport, and these questions form the crux of this chapter.

To trace the transnational shifts in futebol feminino that contributed to the whitening and feminization of the sport, I will focus on key moments in futebol feminino between 1996 and the present. The first of these moments was in 1997, when clubs in São Paulo realized a private regional tournament called the *Paulistana,* intended to cultivate women's soccer in the country. This tournament has a specific place in the history of Brazilian women's soccer. Shortly after the 1996 picture was taken, the *seleção feminina* (national women's team) returned home to a country astonished by their Olympic success. The team, which had little financial support, had placed fourth. Even though Brazil was the first Latin American nation to have women's soccer (*futebol feminino*), few Brazilians could imagine "women" and "soccer" in the same sentence. The team's achievement awoke Brazilians to the potential of women's soccer. Hoping to capitalize on the team's success as well as new forms of television broadcasting, entrepreneurs invested in a women's soccer

tournament, which they called the *Paulistana,* and staged the first iteration in 1997 in the city of São Paulo.

This first tournament was followed by a series of competitions that culminated in a particularly egregious championship in 2001 that executed a distinct plan to increase the popularity of women's soccer: to sexualize it. In what the managers of the Football Federation of São Paulo (*Federação Paulistana de Futebol*, or FPF) referred to as the "solution" to women's soccer (Arruda 2001, E5), selectors prioritized players considered "pretty" over athletic ability (Matos 2001). In sections below, I probe and dissect the logics that informed this tournament, and specifically what beauty meant in this context. I draw on my interviews with soccer players (including those who tried out for this tournament as well as the former national team captain), uncensored statements from club managers, and media coverage of the two tournaments. The *Paulistana's* overt inclusions and exclusions, and its policing and managing of women's bodies, reveal a form of social engineering that is not uncommon in Brazilian history. The tournament, as well as the changes that followed in its aftermath, illustrate the contentions surrounding the visibility of futebol feminino during this period of the late 1990s – early 2000s.

The tournament signals a change in futebol feminino that has had lasting effects. Namely, as the players become featured in more visible tournaments and on television, they are increasingly subject to visual forms of gendered and racialized disciplining. This shift, combined with a lack of financial support, is a contributing factor to the migration of futebolistas following the 1996 Olympic Games. The majority of the futebolistas who leave Brazil come to the United States, which

represents an ideal in terms of structural conditions and relative freedom of gender performance when players in Brazil are negotiating for a better life. In particular, the coverage and activism of Sissi do Amor (the player holding the banner in FIG. 1), who is one of the top women players in the world and who has been outspoken about the problems within Brazilian women's soccer, suggests both economic and identity-based motives for migration.

The migration of Brazilian women athletes and their status as transmigrants—people who live between various nations—who both work and come to represent various locals (local, regional & national teams) informs their approach to athletavism (athletic activism).[10] Namely, these players' experiences and exchanges abroad characterize the fight for futebol feminino (from 1996 – today) as one of both recognition and redistribution (Fraser 2000). Players fight for visibility, seeking recognition in the form of respect, remuneration, and representation in football's

[10] The term athletavist draws inspiration from Diana Taylor's expression artivist (artist-activists). Just as artivists use performance to intervene in political contexts, struggles and debates, athletavists use their athletic performance for activist purposes. Women and LGBT+ athletes have shared with me over and over again that they have never been able to simply play futebol; their mere presence on the field is an act of resistance against the oppressive forces that seek to exclude them and to marginalize them. I also use this term against conservative critiques that 'athletes should just stick to sports.' As a concept, athletavist affirms the insistence of these athlete-activists that advocating for change is an inseparable part of their sport.

governing bodies.[11] Statements from former and current members of Brazil's seleção feminina show how players use their experiences and status in the U.S. to hone and to make heard such demands. I draw from interviews with transmigrant futebolistas to highlight the ways their identity-based claims for acceptance are also calls for egalitarian redistribution of resources.

Given the significance of futebol to Brazilian identity, these athletes' demands to be acknowledged *as* futebolistas is also a call to be seen as part of the national project. However, the impetus for recognition via futebol is an assimilative move that puts players' demands for visibility at odds with the gendered conditions for admission imposed by futebol's ruling elite. The recognition athletes are fighting for looks different than what owners and managers have in mind. Ultimately, campaigns for the visibility of futebol feminino are fraught.

Examining this twenty-year period (1996 -2016) in the history of futebol feminino illuminates the unintended consequences that accompany visibility. In particular, as global interest in the presence of women in sports has increased, I suggest that we must be attentive to the underlying demands for femininity inherent in many variants of these discourses. While specific to Brazil, the racial and heterosexist ideologies at play in the women's soccer team clarify how what might at first appear as a positive form of inclusion might still be beholden to capital and its

[11] This example, then, is a counter to scholars like Nancy Fraser (2000) who argue that the increase in identity-based activism necessarily indicates a decline in egalitarian, redistributive claims.

attendant eugenics logics.

Methods and Sources

I begin my analysis with a short sketch of historical context, focusing on the formation of Brazilian national identity through the twentieth century and the place of soccer—particularly women's soccer—in it. In establishing the frameworks through which to understand futebol feminino's development through the 1900s, I am most indebted to women's soccer historians Brenda Elsey, Joshua Nadel, Carmen Rial and Aira Bonfim for their pioneering work unearthing the stories of futboleras and futebolistas. Following their lead, I draw my approach from cultural studies of sport to read futebol for the ways it creates and transforms individual experiences, everyday life, social relations and power.

In the following section, I focus on an archive of media coverage about the *Paulistana* tournaments (from 1997 - 2001), to think through the apparent relationships between the "beautification" of athletic women's bodies and Brazil's eugenic legacy. I focus my analysis on media coverage because of its centrality to the fate of women's soccer. Paulo Bastos, who was the coordinator of the 1996 seleção feminina and director of the company Sport Promotion (the company responsible for realizing the 1997 *Paulistana* women's tournament) makes this point clear: "We know that the help of the media is fundamental to consolidate the modality in [Brazil]" (França 1997, 8). While managers view media reporting as essential to grow the sport, coverage of futebol feminino is relatively scarce (especially compared to coverage of the men's game). Given the dearth of material about futebol feminino,

and given the difficulty accessing Brazilian sources from the United States, my archive is built mainly from the personal collections of players, coaches and managers. The collection of artist, activist, scholar and footballer Caitlin Fisher, co-founder of the Guerreiras project, has been particularly useful in piecing together the histories of futebol feminino in the late 1990s. Fisher played soccer in São Paulo in the late 1990s, early 2000s, and I draw from the archive of newspaper and magazine clippings she collected during this time, with her permission. Due to Fisher's physical location, but also because print media is concentrated in São Paulo (Brazil's financial capital), nearly all of the sources are from São Paulo city and state. Because of the dates I am examining (the 90s are a transitionary period between print and on-line media that has made locating sources difficult), the scarcity of coverage about women's sports (TV and radio coverage are non-existent), and my location in the United States, Fisher's archive is my primary source. I certainly do not assume this source is complete, although it is thorough; she has done an impressive job collecting and recording.

To complement this archive of media coverage, I turn to interviews. From November 2016 – August 2017 (with IRB approval), I conducted interviews with seven players, three journalists, two managers and one coach, all of whom participated in the *Paulistana* tournaments from 1997 - 2001. I conducted all interviews in Portuguese, and all translations are my own.

After the 1997 *Paulistana* tournament, many of the players from the 1996 seleção feminina left Brazil to play in the United States. I follow the exile of one athlete in particular, Sissileide do Amor Lima (Sissi, pictured holding the flag in FIG.

1.1), who was in her 30s when she was captain of the Brazil women's national soccer team. Her move from Brazil to the United States underscores the gendered effects of this focus on feminine beautification and its transnational repercussions. Again, I draw from Fisher's archive to trace the gendered discourses from Brazilian media coverage that follow her migration. Sissi and I have communicated via Facebook, and I spoke with her over the phone in November 2016.

Next, I draw from interviews with Brazil's national team or *seleção permanente*, an elite group that convened in preparation for the FIFA Women's World cup in 2015. The interviews were conducted by Aira Bonfim, a researcher from the Museu do Futebol in São Paulo, on June 1, 2015. She gave me access to video recordings of the interviews in July 2017, and with her permission I transcribed, translated and coded these using NVivo software. I explore how these athletes understand identity formation between Brazil and the United States, how their transmigrations built feminist consciousness and networks of solidarity, and how they used their visibility and experiences abroad to jockey for rights in their home countries.

Visibility and Futebol Feminino in the Twentieth Century

Women's soccer exists in a constant state of struggle against multiple systems of oppression. Often this war has been waged as a battle for visibility, with visibility meaning recognition on the one side, and visibility as control over the gender presentation of futebolistas on the other. Players fight for recognition and for an equitable redistribution of resources, given the gross inequalities in pay and

infrastructure between women's and men's futebol. Soccer's governing elite, however, have often viewed the rise in futebol feminino as an opportunity to discipline player's gender performances in an attempt to feminize the modality, supposedly to make it more appealing to marketers. While this visibility dilemma is not specific to Brazil, its stakes are perhaps higher, since futebol has constructed a sense of nationhood more than any other social practice (Gordon and Helal 2002; Franzini 2005; Goldblatt 2006; Nadel 2014; Rubio 2014; Shienin 2015; Bocketti 2016;).

To be excluded from futebol is to be excluded symbolically from full participation in the nation. Brazilian nationhood's specific, intimate relationship with soccer was not created in isolation. Nation building in Brazil and the United States have happened in relation to one another.[12] Micol Seigel, for instance, has written extensively about the ways Brazilian and North American racial formations take shape in relation to one another and simultaneously with constructions of nation (2009). The United Sates and Brazil are culturally linked: they are "bound up in each other in discursive and material arenas in uneven, awkward, sometimes brutal ways, earlier and with greater consequence than most observers have been willing to admit" (2009, 11). In the early years of Brazil's nation formation, however, leaders looked to Europe for models of modernity. They discovered futebol as a way to articulate modernity.

[12] And in relation to other nations, as well.

Throughout the twentieth century, the development of futebol feminino in Brazil and Europe mirrored one another. Soccer scholar Carmen Rial notes that the evolution of women's soccer in both places looked the same until the 1990s:

> It (women's soccer) began at the same time as the soccer practiced by men, also as a comical circus curiosity; it grew at the start of the twentieth century; it was officially banned for medical reasons in the 1940s; and it resumed following pressure from the 1970s, becoming institutionalized in the 1980s and formally equal to men's soccer in the 1990s (2014, 86).

However, women's exclusion from the sport means more in Brazil. At each step of futebol's history, women's (in)visibility played a central role in establishing the terms for women's involvement.

Soccer as we might recognize it today arrived from the U.K. to Latin America in the late nineteenth century, a period when political and intellectual leaders began looking to Europe for models of modernity (Nadel 2014, 219). Throughout the Americas and Europe in this period, sport and physical education served as a way to develop national identity as well as the bodies and minds of citizens. In Brazil, advocates of physical education encouraged women to practice sports like swimming that reinforced feminine attributes such as delicacy and harmony (Nadel 2014, 216). At the same time, emerging technologies such as film and photography visually depicted popular life. The increasing prominence of these technologies led to new anxieties about depictions of women's bodies in sports. As Brenda Elsey and Joshua Nadel note, "physical education experts worried above all that women's sports would harm the female aesthetic. They feared that changes to women's physique, such as building muscle, would blur gender difference" (2019, 66). In other words, visual technologies spurred a defense of binary gender ideology to make visible distinctions between the sexes.

Policy makers coded soccer as aggressive and physical; *futebol* was tagged *coisa de macho*, for men only. The athleticism of the sport thereby became bound up with notions of national manhood (Mosse 1996, 7). Yet, Brazil was also the first Latin American country to introduce an official women's soccer team (Rial 2012). Some of the first images like those in FIG 3 are of women playing soccer as part of a circus act (Chade 2018). While this might indicate that women's soccer was treated as spectacle, the photograph nonetheless provides evidence of women's early participation.

FIG. 1.3 Revista A Cigarra, 1926. Acervo do Arquivo Público do Estado de São Paulo.
Cited in Chade, 2018.

Although futebol feminino was often photographed in carnavalesque fashion, elite Brazilian women did have examples of women's soccer from abroad. According

to Elsey and Nadel, sportswomen in Europe appeared often in the early twentieth century Brazilian press, "influenc[ing] fashion trends" like short hair and loose clothes (70). Debates about the masculinizing effects of women's soccer were also raging in Europe and North America, with alarmist declarations, such as a London newspaper story in 1920 that sporting activities made women's hands grow larger. Reporting on issues like these that were surfacing elsewhere (in England, for instance), facilitated discussions of "views on controversial issues" in Brazil because such issues could be discussed with greater physical and metaphorical distance (Elsey and Nadel 2019, 70).

A figure less controversial than the futebolista was the female fan. Women fans of various clubs created chants and choreographed halftime dances to cheer on their clubs, including Fulminense, Flamengo, America, and Botafogo (Elsey and Nadel 2019, 71). Magazine depictions of the fan, however, focused on her ornamental role. The publication *Sport Ilustrado*, for example, featured beauty contests for Rio's most attractive sport fan - a practice that persists in magazines and sport clubs today. Presented in this way, Elsey and Nadel assert, women's presence in soccer was acceptable only when used to prop up soccer's masculinity and heteronormativity (71).

In addition to women's participation as circus players and fans, official futebol feminino tournaments took place in São Paulo and Rio as early as 1931, and received accolades in local papers like *O imparcial* and *Jornal dos sports*. But even as many supported futebol feminino, some government officials sought to exclude women from the national sport, fearing that their desire to compete on the soccer field

would threaten the "traditional order" of things (Nadel 2014, 216). Futebol feminino threatened the sport's fashioning along masculine lines, which was increasingly foundational to Brazilian nationhood. Thus, the resistance to women's presence in futebol grew together with women's rising visibility.

The coding of soccer as masculine happened alongside its weaving into Brazil's national fabric. Such coding made women's soccer appear even dangerous. National policies like physical education programs that dictated which sports girls could play discouraged them from playing soccer, drawing on prevailing medical justifications that "aggressive" sports like futebol put female reproduction at risk (Nadel 2014, 218). Article 54 of decree law 3199 (which created the governing body *Conselho Nacional do Esporte,* or The National Sport Council) finally banned it altogether in 1941 (Rial 2012). This ban targeted middle- and upper-class women—the populations that nationalist eugenic policies focused on for reproducing "desirable" Brazilianness. While many working class women at local and regional levels defied the prohibition and held competitions for futebol feminino, the ban kept women out of national competitions. As Carmen Rial writes:

> Banning women from soccer, which combined gender, nation and the public imagination, excluded them from the greater collective and a broad spectrum of social practices. Incapable of representing the nation symbolically in competitions where nationalist feeling was re-enacted, they were not only passive and submissive, but also second class citizens (2014, 88).

The ban on women's soccer lasted for four decades, during which Brazil experienced several political shifts, including a long period of dictatorship. The ban was lifted in 1979, the same year an Amnesty Law passed that allowed exiled citizens to return from abroad. In other words, the prohibition was overturned at the same time

that Brazil began to transition to democracy. During this period the feminist movement—influenced especially by exiled women returning from France—took up debates on physical education, debates they had been previously excluded from. Brazilian feminists fighting the dictatorship in the 1970s, who were more concerned with Marxism and class oppression, were joined by their formerly-exiled sisters who expanded feminist platforms to include questions of the body and sexual and reproductive rights (Rial 2014, 88).

But if women were able to overturn the ban on futebol feminino, federations in Brazil and elsewhere implemented a policy that kept women's soccer subordinate. Inspired by the German football federation's restrictions imposed in 1970, women's soccer around the world had different rules that underestimated their abilities, such as shorter playing time—70 minutes rather than 90—as well as mandatory bodily protection such as breast shields. It was only in 1990 that these regulations were universally abolished, and only because the Union of European Football Association (UEFA) standardized the rules to eliminate regional and national variations.

Although women's teams like the Radars in Rio de Janeiro formed and competed in the early 1990s, it is only after the 1996 Olympic Games that Brazilian women can be said to have "made a significant return to the soccer fields" (Rial 2014, 89). While historians such as Elsey, Nadel, Rial and Bonfim have unearthed stories of futebolistas who persisted throughout the twentieth century, a visible history of futebol feminino is relatively recent. And unlike women's soccer in the Global North, the precariousness of Brazilian futebol feminino has led many women athletes to

leave the country, searching for better economic and cultural conditions (Rial 2014, 98).

The barriers to women's soccer in Brazil are both financial and social. Among the most significant barriers are the stigmatization of female masculinity and lesbian baiting, both of which are connected to visual impressions of players' gender and sexuality (Fisher and Dennehy 2015). Attempts to counter these stereotypes, including a series of tournaments that took place in São Paulo in the early 2000s, involved feminizing female athletes by promoting a heteronormative physical appearance.

"Inspired by the United States with the face of Brazil": Futebol Feminino as Product

To better understand the logic of club managers who sought to feminize the sport, I interviewed Rogério Hamm, a former member of the São Paulo Futebol Club (SPFC) directorate, who played a key role in shaping the Paulistana tournament. I met him on July 7, 2017 to ask about his experience at the club as it was integrating futebol feminino in the late 1990s and about how the first Paulistana competition in 1997 came to fruition. Hamm shared that he was 26 years old when he was invited to be the assistant director of marketing in the SPFC. It was 1997 and SPFC directors decided to create a woman's team, motivated in part by the seleção's performance at the 1996 Olympic games. According to Hamm, no one knew exactly where to place women's soccer within the club. Directors considered housing it alongside the men's professional teams but feared their professional team "might be affected by having other activities". They considered creating futebol feminino in the amateur division,

"but they also feared contact between boys and girls". So they ultimately decided, according to Hamm, to make futebol feminino a marketing activity. This move enforced sex segregation, isolating the women's sport so as not to "affect" the other, more important activities: namely, futebol masculino. But putting futebol feminino in the marketing division predetermined the preoccupation with the sport's image, rather than its substance. The reasoning of SPFC then-director Fernando Casal do Rei and marketing director J. Franco support this assertion. Franco and Casal do Rei decided that the women's sport would become the responsibility of the marketing division "because they thought that **the biggest challenge to futebol feminino was the image**. It was acceptance. So they understood that marketing could bring the modality more acceptance, more ability to capture the fans," according to Hamm. Club managers thus determined that what futebol feminino needed to be "accepted" was a certain kind of visibility that depended on a marketable image. The director, Franco, was preoccupied with sponsorships, licenses, the (franchised) schools, the images of players and coaches and assigned responsibility to Hamm, the assistant director of marketing. Franco saw Hamm as someone young and fresh, with a university degree who would "work the sport like a product."

I asked Hamm to elaborate on how the modality was understood at the time; what sort of prejudice against futebol feminino were the directors responding to or anticipating? He responded: "everything, **especially masculinized women**. And for the **level of competitiveness** to be much lower than the men's game…It could be full of prejudice. And it was treated as a product." Elaborating on what it meant to treat futebol feminino as a product, Hamm recalled that there was company called *Sport*

Promotion that was also "treating futebol feminino as a product. And this was the same company that undertook volleyball, that made volleyball in Brazil go as far as it has (*chegar tão longe*)." At the time, there was a popular TV anchor named Luciano do Vale on a channel called *Bandeirantes,* who headed Sport Promotion and who had a major role in popularizing volleyball.

> So Sport Promotions took up futebol feminino to be the new volley. Sport Promotions adopted futebol feminino, made an agreement with the CBF, and began doing *propaganda* with the athletes from '96. Then a club from Saad (Esporte Clube) mounted a group of 60 athletes. So Sport Promotions had the idea to create an official competition. And they did an official agreement with the *Federação Paulista de Futebol* (the Football Federation of São Paulo, or FPF). This was one of the Paulista competitions. They decided to create a competition model **inspired by the USA, with the face of Brazil**.

Specifically, Brazilian organizers were inspired the strength of women's soccer in U.S. universities. In São Paulo at the time, there were few futebol teams at the university level. The 1997 Paulistana aimed to create university teams and have them play in the tournament against pre-existing club teams. The plan was to include the five major teams from São Paulo—SPFC, Palmeiras, Corinthians, Santos, Portuguesa—and then complement the roster with teams from the Universities like the *Universidade Federal de São Paulo* (USP), Mackenzie and São Judas. Because clubs had never competed against university teams, this was new for Brazilian futebol, and it was the U.S.-university model that inspired this experiment.

U.S. women's soccer, however, is strong because of the impact of Title IX of the Educational Amendments act of 1972 (commonly referred to as Title IX) on the National College Athletic Association (NCAA). Title IX mandated equal access to,

equal participation in and equal financial investment in educational provision for males and females. According to sport scholars Sara Booth and Katie Liston:

> One unintended consequence of this was the emergence of athletic programs at American colleges and universities that became a springboard and driver for the development of women's soccer. This in effect led to the subsequent emergence of the U.S. as a late twentieth century zone of prestige…[which] has facilitated the dissemination, examination, discussion and exchange of ideas and beliefs about women's soccer and an intensification, over time, in the global recruitment of athletic talent (2014, 54 and 64).

Scholars in sport studies often use the term "zone of prestige" to describe the acclaim given to U.S. women's soccer; such esteem has a snowball effect because it continues to attract others and further enhance its status. The NCAA is a critical component for building and maintaining the reputation of women's soccer in the U.S.

Unlike the government policy-driven changes in the U.S., the 1997 Brazilian championship was a public-private partnership comprising the Confederação Brasileira de Futebol (CBF), the Federação Paulistana de Futebol, Sport Promotion and both private and public universities. Thus, while organizers had representational aspirations to grow futebol feminino, they did not have the necessary institutional mechanisms to truly make this possible. Since none of the bodies organizing the 1997 games had existing teams, they divided the 60 players registered with the CBF among them. Each team could complement the roster as they wished. The question, Hamm pointed out, was how they would do this. "Me- young, passionate- I wanted to be a part of this. For other senior members this was just another activity, but for me, this could make my career. So I started attending trainings, accompanying everything - I woke, slept, dreamt about this. I dedicated myself body and soul, and this brought me close to the athletes." Because Hamm was involved the longest and was a leader in putting together the tournament, he had the first pick and selected the star players,

Sissi, Formiga and Juliana, as well as a top coach referred to as Eduard. “Then every team made their choices according to these characteristics…The players were distributed amongst the teams, but ours was the strongest, much stronger. Then the competition started.”

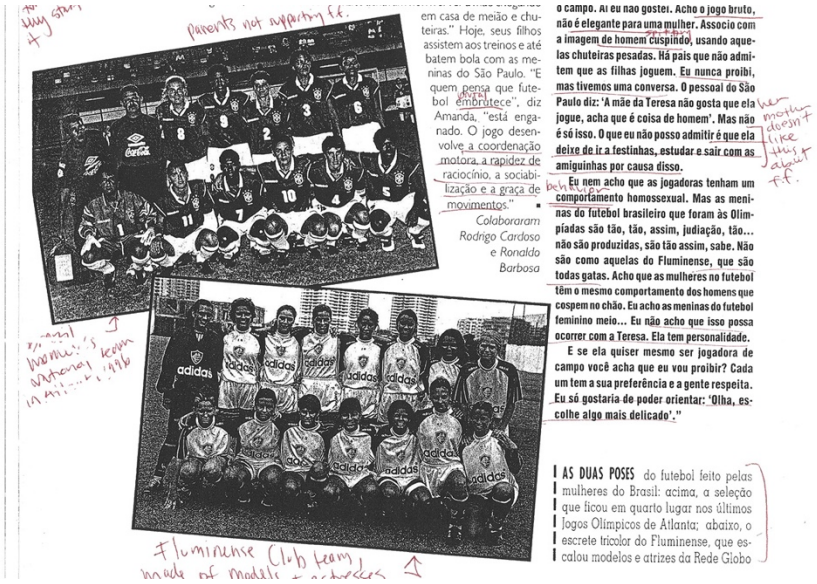
It is apparent from my conversation with Hamm that the organizers of the 1997 championship faced a conundrum. On the one hand, they wanted to combat the prejudice of supposedly masculinized women athletes to be able to sell the sport to sponsors. On the other, they also wanted the skill of the players from the Olympic games, who did not necessarily conform to marketers’ beauty standards. Featuring skilled players was also necessary to confront the prejudice that women did not play as well as men.

Organizers’ attempts to address this dissonance included policy and visibility campaigns. One policy, for instance, stated that players had to be between the ages of 15 and 23 years old, but that each team would have three exceptions (França 1997, 8). In this way, each team could have three Olympic-level players, who were almost all older than 23. Organizers defended the policy, claiming it would make the competition fairer. But, these age limits may also have been an attempt to ensure the physical appearance of the new generation conformed to sexist and racist beauty standards. Indeed, media coverage of the 1997 tournament described below signals such a shift.

“Beauty is fundamental”: From the Olympics to the Paulistanas

My opening photos of the Brazilian national team hinted at the increasing

sexualization and whitening of soccer players. These processes can be tracked in more careful ways if we analyze media coverage of regional soccer clubs in the late 1990s, when a concerted effort to recast women's soccer took place. At this more granular level, we can see how an effort to build a new culture of women's soccer in Brazil played out. Media articles in this period about professionalizing women's soccer all highlight the imperative of "beautifying" soccer players. Seven articles from popular sports, news, and fashion magazines as well as newspapers (based in the city of São Paulo) published between 1996 and 1997, introducing athletes from regional teams in Rio and São Paulo, contrast them visually with players from the 1996 Olympic team. The regional athletes are compared favorably as the "new" face of women's soccer. In a 1997 issue of *Marie Claire*, editors overlay an image of the 1996 Olympic team on a photo of Rio's Fulminense Club team with the heading "The new generation picks up the ball on the sport [soccer]" (FIG 1.4). The caption below includes a reference to "models and actresses from the Globo [TV] network" who make up the Fulminense team (Camaro and Albuquerque 1997, 42). The implication here is that the new generation of athletes will perform like the older ones, but they will be conventionally beautiful. The images also suggest that the more beautiful "models and actresses" have lighter skin and longer hair than the Olympic players.



em casa de meião e chuteiras." Hoje, seus filhos assistem aos treinos e até batem bola com as meninas do São Paulo. "E quem pensa que futebol embrutece", diz Amanda, "está enganado. O jogo desenvolve a coordenação motora, a rapidez de raciocínio, a sociabilização e a graça de movimentos." ■ *Colaboraram Rodrigo Cardoso e Ronaldo Barbosa*

o campo. Aí eu não gostei. Acho o jogo bruto, não é elegante para uma mulher. Associo com a imagem de homem cuspindo, usando aquelas chuteiras pesadas. Há pais que não admitem que as filhas joguem. Eu nunca proibi, mas tivemos uma conversa. O pessoal do São Paulo diz: 'A mãe da Teresa não gosta que ela jogue, acha que é coisa de homem'. Mas não é só isso. O que eu não posso admitir é que ela deixe de ir a festinhas, estudar e sair com as amiguinhas por causa disso.

Eu nem acho que as jogadoras tenham um comportamento homossexual. Mas as meninas do futebol brasileiro que foram às Olimpíadas são tão, tão, assim, judiação, tão... não são produzidas, são tão assim, sabe. Não são como aquelas do Fluminense, que são todas gatas. Acho que as mulheres no futebol têm o mesmo comportamento dos homens que cospem no chão. Eu acho as meninas do futebol feminino meio... Eu não acho que isso possa ocorrer com a Teresa. Ela tem personalidade.

E se ela quiser mesmo ser jogadora de campo você acha que eu vou proibir? Cada um tem a sua preferência e a gente respeita. Eu só gostaria de poder orientar: 'Olha, escolhe algo mais delicado'."

AS DUAS POSES do futebol feito pelas mulheres do Brasil: acima, a seleção que ficou em quarto lugar nos últimos Jogos Olímpicos de Atlanta; abaixo, o escrete tricolor do Fluminense, que escalou modelos e atrizes da Rede Globo

FIG. 1.4 From “Elas Abrem O Jogo”, Marie Claire, 1997, and the personal archive of Caitlin Fisher.

17-year-old Milene (FIG. 1.5) offers further evidence of media emphasis on beauty. *Veja* magazine placed a full-page picture of the teenager next to a much smaller image of the Olympic team with the heading “Milene, of Corinthians, and the Olympic national team: beauty is fundamental to make visible the undertaking” (Cardoso 1996, 73). The “undertaking” here is the “professionalization” of women’s soccer (Cardoso 1996, 74). The title “Flowers of the Field: middle class girls sign on to football, which now demands beauty in addition to talent” conflates class and beauty, and, implicitly, race. Popularizing the sport requires women’s soccer players to be “beautiful,” a concept narrowly defined through reference to Milene’s features—white and young, with long, straight, blond hair and in middle class attire. In many respects, this reflects a modeling of women’s soccer along U.S. lines, where it has been a heavily middle class and white sport (Booth and Liston 2014).

Esporte

Flores do campo

Meninas de classe média aderem ao futebol, que agora exige beleza além de talento

Mauricio Cardoso

Faz quinze anos que as mulheres jogam bola no Brasil, mas o futebol feminino nunca foi levado a sério. Até que veio a Olimpíada de Atlanta, em que o time brasileiro conseguiu um honroso quarto lugar e mostrou que futebol também é coisa de mulher. Uma nova era começou. Hoje, há cada vez mais meninas de classe média chutando bola e campeonatos estaduais começam a ser organizados no país. Como no futebol masculino, a competência dos jogadores é fundamental para transformar o esporte em um empreendimento comercial. Mas só para as mulheres, ao contrário do dos homens, isso não é suficiente. Os clubes estão exigindo que além de saber bater sua bolinha as jogadoras sejam bonitas.

O maior sucesso nessa área hoje é o time de beldades do Fluminense, do Rio de Janeiro. Comandado pela atriz Suzana Werner, estrela do seriado *Malhação*, da Rede Globo, o time costuma se apresentar na preliminar dos jogos do time masculino do Fluminense. Os torcedores deliram. "Susana, casa comigo, vai", gritava Bruno de Alvarenga Couto, 17 anos, à beira do gramado, numa partida disputada há duas semanas no estádio das Laranjeiras, no Rio. No Rio Grande do Sul, a atração é Érika Dalla Vecchia, 17 anos, eleita recentemente miss Porto Alegre e candidata a uma vaga no time que o Grêmio prepara para disputar o campeonato gaúcho. Érika só tem uma dúvida. Não sabe se faz carreira nos gramados ou nas passarelas.

O Corinthians, de São Paulo, também prepara um time para o campeonato paulista. Contratou Sissi, Márcia Taffarel e Roseli, jogadoras da seleção olímpica, e reforçou seu ataque com Milene Domingues, modelo de 17 anos, conhecida como a "rainha da embaixada", pela capacidade de fazer malabarismos com uma bola no pé. Fluminense, Grêmio e Corinthians seguem a recomendação do projeto de marketing do Sasd, de São Paulo, o mais antigo clube de futebol feminino do país, com quinze anos de atividade. "O grupo de jogadoras obedecerá ao novo perfil da modalidade, de atletas jovens e, sempre que possível, atraentes", reza a cartilha do Sasd. Não é que as feias não entram mais. A novidade é que as bonitas estão chegando. E são bem-vindas.

Jogo proibido — Vítima de um preconceito feroz, o futebol feminino foi proibido pelo governo militar em 1964. Revogado o veto em 1981, as jogadoras continuaram sendo vistas com reservas. Futebol é coisa de homem, diziam-se na época. Era mesmo. As primeiras meninas a calçar chuteiras só tinham chances de jogar em times de garotos. "Comecei no time de meninos da minha rua", conta Roseli. As jogadoras se ressentem da discriminação e do galhofa apenas nesta década, quando a modalidade lançou raízes na classe média. Em São Paulo, o futebol feminino foi incluído neste ano nas olimpíadas do Grupo, a associação das escolas particulares. O torneio foi um sucesso, com a participação de 58 equipes e 520 garotas. Em Curitiba, terminou na semana passada a Copa Baton, com 24 times de colégios, universidades e clubes de classe média ou grã-finos. "Meu namorado é que aprendeu a jogar bola comigo", diz Esther Jung, 17 anos, artilheira do time

Milene, do Corinthians, e a seleção olímpica: beleza é fundamental para viabilizar o empreendimento

do Colégio Positivo, um dos maiores da cidade. As escolinhas de futebol que só recebiam meninos, são cada vez mais procuradas pelas meninas.

→ Das escolinhas as meninas saem em busca da profissionalização. Em São Paulo, o Corinthians anunciou que iria fazer uma "peneira", um teste para escolher as jogadoras do time da tuxa. "Apareceram 700 garotas", diz Luis Fabiano Fernandes, diretor encarregado do futebol feminino. Dúzeta foram aprovadas. O mesmo fenômeno ocorreu no Sasd. "Meu sonho é me transformar em jogadora profissional", diz Juliana Aparício, 17 anos, candidata a zagueira. Juliana, que mora em Valinhos, a 70 quilômetros de São Paulo, aparece para fazer o teste trazida pelo pai, um executivo aposentado da área de seguros. "Se ela quer jogar, dou a maior força", diz o pai. O Sasd, que já tem um grupo de 44 atletas, recebeu mais de 300 candidatas para completar seu elenco. Setenta foram selecionadas.

Espaço próprio — O mercado profissional para receber essa mão-de-obra está apenas começando a se formar. No Rio, dezesseis times disputam o primeiro campeonato de futebol feminino de praia e a partir de novembro as mulheres fazem a preliminar da Copa Rio, um torneio masculino. Campeonatos regionais estão sendo preparados, entre outros Estados, em São Paulo, Rio Grande do Sul e Paraná. O projeto mais ambicioso está se desenvolvendo em São Paulo pela empresa Sport Promotion, a mesma que patrocina a seleção brasileira na Olimpíada de Atlanta. Programado para acontecer a partir de março do ano que vem, o campeonato paulista terá a participação dos grandes times de São Paulo, patrocinadores próprios e transmissão pela televisão. Terá vida própria, independente do campeonato masculino. "Fazemos questão de não disputar partidas nas preliminares dos jogos dos homens", diz José Francisco Coelho Leal, o Kiko, da Sport Promotion. "O campeonato feminino vai ter horários diferenciados e estádios próprios."

Além de Corinthians, Palmeiras, São Paulo, Santos e Portuguesa, os cinco clubes grandes do futebol paulista, participarão três equipes universitárias representando a USP, o Mackenzie e o São Judas Tadeu. "Nosso interesse é mais desenvolvê-lo que competitivo", diz Emílio Miranda, diretor do Cepeusp, o clube esportivo da USP. "Queremos estudar o modelo técnico da mulher no futebol." A regra em São Paulo é aproveitar o maior número de jogadoras da velha seleção brasileira e abrir espaço para as mais jovens. O regulamento prevê que as jogadoras, com exceção de três, tenham no máximo 23 anos. E, de preferência, que sejam atraentes.

Mulheres de chuteiras

Uma breve história do futebol feminino

1898
Primeira partida internacional: Em Londres, Inglaterra x Escócia

1921
Primeira partida no Brasil. Em São Paulo, Senhoritas Cantarinenses x Senhoritas Tremembenses

1964
O Conselho Nacional de Desportos, CND, proíbe a prática do futebol feminino no Brasil

1981
Revogada a proibição

1996
Estréia nas Olimpíadas. Os Estados Unidos ganham ouro e o Brasil fica em quarto lugar

72 30 de outubro, 1996 veja

veja 30 de outubro, 1996 73

FIG. 1.5 From "Flores Do Campo: Meninas de Classe Média Aderem Ao Futebol, Que Agora Exige Beleza Além de Talento," Veja, October 1996, and the personal archive of Caitlin Fisher.

Perhaps the most striking example of these emphases is actress, model and futebolista Susana Werner, who became the poster child for Brazilian women's soccer in the late 1990s. Werner began playing just 5 years before the first Paulistana. Pictured below posing for the soccer magazine *Placar*, Werner embodies a similar whitened feminine aesthetic.[13]

[13] *Placar*, which has appeared monthly since the 70s, is one of the most popular sports publications in Brazil.

FIG. 1.6 From "Susana Werner: Acredite, ela joga bola!" Placar, September 1996.

The article and image highlights the new soccer generation's heightened femininity, and erases the supposedly negative stereotype of women athletes as masculine. Her suggestive pose and the absence of clothing reflects the sexualization of women soccer players.

At the core the marketing challenge perceived by Brazilian women's soccer companies (and indeed women's sports in general) is the presumption that gender works in binary ways and that men and women exhibit counterposed traits. Several articles about the Paulistana tournament define femininity in opposition to masculinity. Manuel Maria, then-coach of the women's Santos team, specifies how "working with women is different. You must take care of certain things like menstrual cycles, respect the cramps, which men don't have. Besides female players

are more sensitive, they can't do the stronger exercises . . .." (Revista Jovem Santos 1997, 39).

Drawing on a discourse of biological differences and associating femininity with sensitivity, weakness, and unpredictability, the comment reassures readers that women's soccer will not disrupt the gender binary. On the article's first page, Paulistana is described as a "show of grit, skill and… sensuality. The male fans applaud, the players respond with smiles" (Revista Jovem Santos 1997, 36). Like the male players, women must have drive and talent, but, according to journalists, they must also be heterosexy in order to attract male audiences.

Soccer is, conversely, also celebrated in some accounts from this period as a vehicle to cultivate conventional feminine beauty. In one newspaper article, a physical education professor claims that playing soccer burns calories and builds muscle, which is great for "women who like to have defined legs, buttocks, and stomachs…. In other words, women's soccer is not for macho-women" (Ramalho and Abrunhosa 1996, 80). Slim, fit bodies are feminine as long as muscle definition is confined to the lower body. Another article proclaims, "you're wrong if you think that football makes women more masculine (emphasis in original)" (Cultura Inglesa Magazine 1997, 9). The phrasing is indicative of the contestation under way about soccer's effect women's bodies. The images accompanying the article also make clear that soccer's feminine ideal is racialized as white.

The 2001 Paulistana received more funding than the 1997 tournament, attracted greater media coverage, and was more polemical about the place of women's soccer. The number of articles about the 2001 tournament was more than

twice that of the 1997 tournament.[14] Missing from the coverage, however, is an in-depth sense of how the players viewed themselves. To better understand perspectives of players, the following section offers analyses of my interviews with them.

"More feminine, more beautiful": The Selection Process for the 2001 Paulistana

In November 2015, as part of a project on Brazilian women's soccer, I interviewed Cristiane—a professional futebolista who played in both Paulistana tournaments.[15] When I asked her to talk about herself, Cristiane launched into a monologue about her remarkable profession as a footballer. She described her birth in the state of São Paulo to working class parents. Her father, a futebol fanatic without sons, encouraged his daughters to play soccer "from the moment they could walk," which is unusual for Brazilian girls. When I asked her to describe her participation in the Paulistanas, Cristiane said that the 2001 Paulistana tournament was unique. She had heard about the women's soccer league from a friend who advised her to register for tryouts at a gym in São Paulo. When she arrived, Cristiane noticed that promoters were using the image of a well-known actress wearing a tight short uniform to

[14] Half of these articles indicate that the championship will be televised. While it is beyond the scope of this article to demonstrate the connections between TV coverage and the sexualization of athletes, that topic merits further investigation.

[15] I was introduced to Cristiane (a pseudonym) through athlete, activist, artist and scholar Caitlin Fisher. Caitlin put me in touch with several players, and Cristiane was the only one who responded to my emails.

advertise the tournament. Why, she wondered, would they publicize someone famous "for being beautiful" rather than for playing soccer? Oddly, the tryouts included many days of "tests," a departure from standard recruitment procedures. Cristiane and her teammates noticed that "any girls who played well but were sort of masculine" were "cut" by managers: "They didn't pass them. And the girls who were more beautiful but not very good, they were approved (*aprovadas).*"

Media coverage of women's soccer in this period confirms her observations. A reporter for the *Folha de São Paulo* wrote that the beautifying of athletes was among the "principal objectives" for the "success of the tournament" (Arruda 2001, E5). The criteria included long hair, short shorts, and makeup that would "enhance the beauty and sensuality of the player to attract a male public" (Arruda 2001, E5). Eduardo José Farah, then-president of the Football Federation of São Paulo (Federação Paulistana de Futebol—FPF), discussed the "necessity" of "trying to unite … soccer and femininity" (Arruda 2001, E5).

Media coverage of this period also indicates that promoters imagined ideal Paulistana beauty as white and middle/upper class. According to Cristiane, white women advanced whether or not they demonstrated superior athletic skills. Afro-Brazilian players, many of whom had superior athletic skills but were read as masculine, didn't make the cut. Cristiane claimed that finalists were "more feminine, more delicate, they dressed differently…They were more vain (*vaidosa*)…more beautiful girls, with long straight hair and more feminine" and that they were "more groomed (*cuidadas*)… they have more money." Most Brazilians would consider Cristiane herself racially white or *pardo*, brown. Phenotypically, she has brown eyes

and long, straightened, blond hair; by Brazilian standards, she is clearly not black, which she confirmed later in our conversation.[16]

Cristiane's take on racial discrimination reveals dimensions of tournament "casting":

> Cara Snyder (hereafter CS): …and how did race enter the tournament?
> Cristiane: …Because soccer is a sport, it's more dominated, even, by black Brazilians, by mixed race. It's the same [for men and women], there's no prejudice in regards to race. It's that many girls who have… who had… that [masculine] appearance… normally they were black. I think just for the question of hair it's more difficult, no? Now it's easier to straighten, but at that time it wasn't so easy, there weren't as many products to make your hair "good" as people say here."

Cristiane acknowledges here that characteristics like long straight hair are phenotypically white. Cristiane notes a correlation between masculinity, blackness and "bad" hair without quite acknowledging that such gendered tropes are racist. Her stance on race in Brazil—that because the people are so mixed, racism doesn't exist—represents a widespread belief usually held by Brazilians who are not black. Afro-Brazilian activists, however, have long worked to dispel this myth of racial democracy and to expose how understandings of race are far from vague, especially given the pervasive racial profiling. In the words of sociologist Djaci David de Oliveira: "The Brazilian intellectual is no longer able to identify who the black people

[16] More data is needed to establish whether sexist practices were mainstreamed *because* of this tournament, or if the Paulistana merely captured what was happening in Brazilian women's soccer due to a combination of factors. In either case, this chapter notes a correlation, rather than establishing causation.

are in Brazil, but the police, the bosses, the media…in addition to other social groups and institutions, know how to identify black people the moment they physically and symbolically assault them, in the moment they deny them jobs they are qualified for" (Oliveira et al. 1999, 47).

According to Christen A. Smith, these "moments of racial contact" make evident and define racial subjectivities (Smith 2016, 11). The athletes who were disqualified from the *Paulistana* were, to use Oliveira's words, "symbolically assaulted"; they lost jobs and were deemed unfit in a racializes gender order. The moment of "cutting" them made clear not only who was black, but also defining blackness as unfeminine and unattractive. It is such exclusions that have produced a racialized hyperfemininity in Brazilian women's soccer.

From Margins to Mainstream: The Longer View

Beauty as a category simultaneously expresses various kinds of social hierarchies. In Brazil, as in many other parts of the world, beauty is a constitutive element not only of sexism but also racism (Jarrín 2016, 536) and classism. As soccer moved from the margins of society into the mainstream, how did female athletes navigate the increased surveillance and disciplining that accompanied these shifts? My interviews with athlete, activist, artist and scholar Caitlin Fisher and Sissi do Amor, former Brazilian national team captain and current soccer coach of the San Francisco *Stingrays*, address these questions.

During my interview, Fisher insisted that mainstreaming women's soccer has pushed athletes to conform to dominant gender and beauty norms. Drawing on twenty

years of research, first as a player and then as a scholar/activist, Fisher argues that players who are now in their thirties experienced a shift in expectations during the 2000s, when women's soccer moved out of the margins and players were suddenly expected to "go to the salon, put make up on, wear short shorts". Some players adapted to this new regime, accepting code switching if it meant earning more money. According to Fisher, however, the newer generation (ages 17 and 18) has "internalized… the pressure [to be] heterosexy, hyper feminine." Although many players might claim greater agency through participating in beautification, Fisher notes that new generations of Brazilian soccer players have fewer options to choose their gender presentation. This leads her to conclude that such agency is only meaningful in the presence of alternatives (Fisher and Dennehy 2015), a point that has also been made by feminist media scholars such as Rosalind Gill (2003). Mainstreaming and U.S. influence factor into the hyperfeminization of women's appearance; they can also lead to "deskilling" of players, she worries. Hyperfeminization shifts the discourse so that even everyday people, including commentators and journalists, value appearance over athleticism.

Sissi, who is commonly viewed as one of the best Brazilian soccer players, confirmed this perception. Expressing frustration about the effects of mainstreaming soccer, she commented:

> In Brazil, people were always criticizing my appearance…saying I wanted to look like a man…It made me indignant that my appearance was the constant object of criticism when I wanted to focus on what was happening on the field. There is great prejudice about appearance in general, from the press, but also from society. Female players feel great pressure to be hyperfeminine. I saw changes in women's soccer after I left Brazil in 2000. Players before then were preoccupied with playing. Now I see much more preoccupation about how to satisfy the marketers and the press. If it were me, I still wouldn't

change at all.

Like Fisher, Sissi perceives the 2000s as a turning point, where the mainstreaming of women's soccer shifted focus from athletic to aesthetic skill. Sports scholars have shown that sporting events generate revenue in complex ways. After 2000, evidence suggests that many women footballers have acquiesced to the industry's racialized, heterosexy standards.

The Paulistana works here as a case study because it offers unambiguous examples of how Brazilian sports promoters and managers seek to recast Brazilian woman's bodies and skills. The tournament grabbed national attention precisely because it valorized aesthetic standards. Fisher and Sissi, however, suggest that discrimination was hidden in plain sight. In fact, their comments intimate that soccer's mainstreaming has encouraged both external and internal policing of women's bodies. Fisher and Sissi believe that the players *themselves* now do much of the policing. In fact, Fisher cited to me the example of a player named Thaisa who, due to harassment from family and teammates, "started taking on a more feminine image. It's a habit now" (Fisher and Dennehy 2015, 1000). Pointing to pressure from marketers and the press, Fisher and Sissi observe that players have altered their behaviors: Paulistana beauty ideals, which largely excluded black and gender-queer bodies, seem to have seeped into Brazilian futebol feminino more generally, culminating in the visual shifts I pointed out at the start of this chapter in juxtaposing two images of the Olympic teams separated by a decade.[17] In effect, tournaments like

[17] Although it may be unsettling to see how much aesthetic regimes affect athletics, anthropologists Alvaro Jarrín and Alexander Edmonds both demonstrate how deeply

the Paulistana trivialized rather than valorized women's sports. Compounded with chronic underfunding, futebol's whitening and feminization has contributed to the

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aesthetic regimes shape everyday life in Brazil. They specifically focus on plastic surgery in Brazil, and how it relates to racial hierarchies. One of Brazil's most popular surgeries, for instance, is rhinoplasty for the "correction of a negroid nose" (Edmonds 2010, 134). Elaborating on the anti-blackness inherent in discourses of beauty, Jarrín contends that "Brazil's neo-Lamarckian eugenics movement was the first to craft beauty as an index of racial improvement within the nation," and that contemporary discourses of beautification showcase lingering eugenic ideologies (Jarrín 2016, 535). Eugenics in this context did not involve systematic extermination of racial others in the manner advocated by the Nazis. Rather, Brazil's state policies implemented "positive" eugenics focused on expanding the numbers of the racially desirable population, such as "mandatory premarital certifications, increased sanitation, hygienic education, and fomenting white immigration from Europe" (Jarrín 2016, 538). Indeed, although the mechanisms for achieving it have changed, gradual whitening persists. Plastic surgery illuminates the ways race and beauty are implicated in social inclusion and exclusion (Jarrín 2016, 536). The gendered expressions of eugenics in the Paulistana corroborates Jarrín's and Edmond's broader arguments about the racialization of beauty. If eugenics in Brazil can be understood as the racialized reproduction of nation, and if mainstreaming women's soccer has brought women athletes into the purview of national-level representation, then the policing of women's bodies in this sporting arena has eugenic implications.

forced migration of some of Brazil's top athletes like Sissi.

Representation and Redistribution in the Exile of Sissi

A major shift in futebol feminino during the early 2000s was a mass exodus of players out of Brazil and into the United States, especially following the 1996 Olympic Games. For example, players such as Sissi, Katia Cilene, Pretínha, and Roseli left Brazil to play in the U.S. clubs such as the San Francisco Bay Area Cyber Rays. This migration was driven by reasons both cultural and economic. For many Brazilian athletes, including Sissi, U.S. women's soccer came to represent their demands for both recognition and redistribution, and they used such representations to jockey for rights back home.

Brazil and the U.S. serve as particularly fertile sites to examine futebolistas' migrations. First, Brazil is known as *O País do Futebol,* the country of soccer, and the U.S. is known as the top country for women's soccer. Brazil's political leaders developed this association in the early 1900s when these (exclusively male) leaders used the sport to solidify national identity, which they defined along masculine lines. The structural conditions that built U.S. women's soccer were made possible by Title IX of the Educational Amendments Act of 1972, which equalized educational spending in women's and men's sport. Title IX redistributed funding so that women's soccer could build from the base up: schools, and especially universities, became funnels for professional leagues. Therefore, the countries' soccer-related titles mark both Brazil and the U.S. as sites to explore relationships between gender and nation, and between identities and institutions. In the case of sports migration, Brazil is one

of the top exporters of players, and the United States is the top receiver of foreign players (Rial 2014). While such statistics seem to adhere to familiar narratives of Latin America as an exporter of "raw materials" and of the U.S. as consumer of these, the reality is more complex. Player migrations are multi-sited: some athletes may play in three different nations in one year.

For Brazilian women athletes, it was the visibility of 1996 Olympic Games—the first where women's soccer was included—that appeared to motivate the formation of local and national women's soccer leagues in Brazil. On an international stage, women's participation and performance in *futebol* came to represent a nation's progress with regard to gender rights: the more developed the sport, the more progressive the nation (Franzini 2005, 316; Rubio 2014). The Brazilian team captain's experiences in Brazil, and later in the U.S., tell the story of what U.S. women's soccer means for Brazilian players, and how they used the model of U.S. women's soccer to advocate for rights within their country.

When the *seleção feminina* returned home in 1996, they returned to a country shocked by their Olympic success. They were shocked for two reasons: firstly, despite Brazil's status as the first Latin American nation to have futebol feminino, few Brazilians could imagine "women" and "soccer" in the same sentence; secondly, the team, which had little financial support, placed fourth. Shortly after Sissi's return home from the Olympics, and after she was ranked the second best player in the world (after Mia Hamm), she received and accepted an offer from the San Francisco Stingrays. Three of her closest teammates also received and accepted offers to play on the West Coast of the USA.


E6 - O ESTADO DE S.PAULO

Divulgação

Sissi virou volante e conquistou os EUA: jogadora tem reconhecimento e condições de trabalho que jamais encontrou atuando no futebol feminino brasileiro

Sissi brilha na terra sem preconceito em campo

FIG 1.7 From "Sissi Brilha na terra…," *O Estado de São Paulo,* N.D., and the personal archive of Caitlin Fisher.

For soccer aficionados, Sissi's move to the United States does not appear surprising, because the country is, without any doubt, imagined by most women soccer players as a mecca. Importantly, it is not just the money and infrastructure that draw the best women players. A specific inflection in the portrayal of the US as an attractive destination is its purported tolerance of gender and sexual non-normativity among women soccer players. Homonationalism, a term that describes the favorable association between a nationalist ideology and LGBTQIA people or their rights, is a distinct feature of representations of U.S. women's soccer. The homonationalist tone in conversations about women's soccer migration becomes clear as we look more closely at the Brazilian media's coverage of Sissi's non-normative gender presentation, and of her migration from Brazil to the U.S.

Eight out of twenty five articles from Brazilian newspapers and magazines (from Fisher's archive) about women's soccer within five years of the Olympic Games made reference to Sissi's move citing financial, professional and personal reasons. For example, an article from the Estado de São Paulo reads "Sissi shines on

the fields without prejudice on the pitch." The subtitle on the side of the image states "Sissi became a forward and conquered the USA: the player has recognition and work conditions that she never found working in Brazilian women's soccer" (FIG. 1.7). The unnamed sports journalist goes on to explain that the players earn an average salary of $25,000 USD per season (better than they would in Brazil, but still not very much by U.S. sporting standards) and benefit from a "professional structure" including scheduled training, gym time and physical therapists. The journalist also notes that according to Sissi "in the United States there's no prejudice that the athlete becomes masculinized" (V.Z., E6, N.D.). Fans support women athletes by sporting their jerseys "which [Sissi] never saw in Brazil." This article and others make reference to Sissi's masculine-of-center presentation, and use the language of sanctuary to describe her migration out of Brazil.

Examples abound of media coverage that constructs the U.S. as not only structurally superior but also as a more open place for women to express masculinity. For example, one title reads "Exiled, experts become stars of 'soccer' in the USA: Without structure at home, Brazilian women migrate to the WUSA, which only cares about their skills when contracting players" (FIG. 1.8). In the article's main text, journalist Eduardo Ohata explains that both structural and social considerations motivate players' migrations: "Besides the structures, they are not harassed about their image, just about soccer" (Ohata 2001). The article goes on to state that the players "seek refuge abroad," presumably from harassment. It is in this supposedly accepting environment that "Sissi recuperates the pleasure of playing in the American League" (Salgueiro 2001).

BELEZA AMERICANA

Exiladas, craques são estrelas do 'soccer' nos EUA

Sem estrutura em casa, brasileiras migram para a WUSA, que só leva em conta a habilidade na hora de contratar

EDUARDO OHATA
DA REPORTAGEM LOCAL

Os destaques da seleção brasileira feminina cumprem um "exílio" nos EUA, causado pela precária estrutura que a categoria ainda enfrenta no Brasil.

Assim, seguindo os passos dos atletas da seleção masculina, elas procuram refúgio no exterior, mas, diferentemente dos colegas milionários, sua popularidade são condições que permitam a continuidade da carreira.

Além de encontrarem estrutura, não são cobradas pela imagem, mas só pelo futebol. Seguindo as responsáveis pelas equipes da WUSA (Women's United Soccer Association), a liga profissional dos EUA, a habilidade é o fator que atrai a atenção dos dirigentes.

"Queremos as melhores atletas. Assim, para as estrangeiras, o melhor meio para chegar à WUSA é integrando suas seleções nacionais", disse Jody Meacham, diretor de relações públicas do Bay Area CyberRays.

Campeão da edição inaugural da WUSA, este time, o Bay Area conta com duas brasileiras, a meia Sissi e a atacante Kátia Cilene. Outras duas, as atacantes Pretinha e Roseli, defendem o Washington Freedom.

Se quiser ouvir, entre as maiores feras da história do futebol feminino brasileiro e foram estrelas da seleção num passado recente. Hoje, são ídolos nos EUA, país que tem motivos para investir, pois tem tradição na categoria — foi campeão olímpico, em 96, e mundial, em 99.

"Se as condições fossem iguais, estaria no Brasil, onde estão meus amigos, parentes. Mas não é assim", diz Kátia.

Apesar de a final da WUSA ter acontecido no mês passado, as estrangeiras da liga foram impedidas de retornar a seus países de origem por terem de cumprir compromissos promocionais previstos em seus contratos.

A liga classifica tais atividades de "trabalho comunitário", que incluem clínicas em escolinhas de futebol e visitas a hospitais.

Em novembro, alguns times têm um período sem treinos. Só então, as estrangeiras do Bay Area estarão liberadas para voltar a seus países. A pré-temporada está prevista para fevereiro, e o torneio começa em abril.

"Fiquei um pouco assim [chateada] ao saber que não poderia voltar ao Brasil logo após o fim do campeonato", diz Kátia, 26.

Para melhor cumprir o papel de "embaixadoras do esporte", as estrelas da WUSA são encorajadas a frequentar aulas.

No Brasil, as jogadoras não contavam com o benefício das bolsas de estudo, como as da.

A WUSA começou com nove times, mas planeja a expansão para dez. A média de público da edição inaugural foi de 8.295 pessoas por jogo, superando a expectativa dos organizadores.

A brasileira Sissi, campeã da WUSA pelo Bay Area, dá autógrafo em escolinha nos EUA

FIG. 1.8 From "Exhiladas…," *Folha de São Paulo*, September 2001, and the personal archive of Caitlin Fisher.

Brazilian media frames the U.S. as leading the path in terms of compensation, infrastructure and gendered politics, and as a more progressive and hospitable place for certain women athletes to work.[18] Still, this oasis is incomplete—shimmering highpoints are tempered by geographical, cultural and linguistic disappointments. The articles discuss the many things about the U.S. that players find troubling including "the distance from their families, the culture and difficulties with the language." In addition to playing, they are required to complete hours of community service and to spend time with the media and sponsors. In many ways, the dream of playing in the U.S. is less attractive on the ground. Players like Kátia, for instance, were "annoyed"

and "pissed off" that managers prevented players from going home when the season's championship games finished. The league held them in the U.S. for a month after the season was over so they could fulfill their duties as "ambassadors of women's soccer" (Ohata 2001, C4). This labor, including visits to schools and hospitals, is contractual but unpaid, and such expectations complicate an easy image of the U.S. as the best place to play women's soccer.


ESPORTES

Meninas encantam os EUA

FABIO SALVIANO

O quarteto brasileiro, formado por Sissi, Katia Cilene, Roseli e Pretinha, está fazendo bonito na Liga americana de suas. As meninas estrearam no último dia 6 na WUSA e encantaram os torcedores americanos. Acostumados ao futebol força, de muita correria e competitividade, os gringos ficaram, literalmente, de boca aberta com os toques e assistências das brasileiras. "Elas ainda fizeram impressionados com algumas jogadas nossas", garantiu Sissi, que atua pelo Bay Area CyberRays, de Washington. Freedom, onde atuam Roseli e Pretinha. O duelo brasileiro em terras americanas agitou a cidade que batou o estádio, em São Francisco. E a estréia teve direito até gol brasileiro, marcado por Pretinha, que garantiu a vitória para o time de Washington. "Foi uma emoção maravilhosa no momento do gol", garantiu Pretinha, que marcou de pênalti. "Não só pelo gol, mas por entrar na história da Liga como a autora do primeiro gol do ano 2001."

As brasileiras estão se destacando na Liga. E dificultam em suas equipes. Sissi mesmo sua passagem pela Liga americana como um desafio pessoal. "A partida

uma das principais jogadoras australianas, e isso é muito gratificante", afirma. "Reencontrei o prazer de jogar."

As brasileiras estão realizadas profissionalmente. Com razão: muitas nunca sonharam ganhar dinheiro com futebol. Com salários que variam de mil a 3 mil dólares mensais na Liga profissional americana, uma espécie de NBA do basquetebol. "Todo está muito diferente. É um ótimo atuar aqui", confidencia Roseli. "Sentimos só uma grande diferença no ritmo de treinamentos. Aqui, os treinos são fortes, bem diferente do Brasil", afirma.

Porém, tudo tem valido a pena para o quarteto, que

FRETINHA festeja com Roseli o gol marcado na abertura desta temporada

FIG. 1.9 From "Meninas encantam os EUA" (The girls love the USA), *Diário Popular*. May 2001, and the personal archive of Caitlin Fisher.

The way Brazilian reporters and Sissi frame her nationality during this period also suggest complex and uneven terrain. Journalists by and large present the U.S. women's soccer league as the top option for *futebolistas* to make a career. But even if Brazilian women play in the U.S., they remain *Brasileiras*, in both their eyes and the eyes of their compatriots. For instance, one article's headline reads "Sissi *dá volta por cima* and becomes a champion in the United States" (Beraldo E6, N.D.). The phrase *dá volta por cima* means to make a comeback, but it is literally translated as "moves to the top," which references geospatial, and perhaps moral, relations between the U.S. and Brazil. The phrase comes from Sissi; she's enjoying so much success that the Cyber Ray's coach, Ian Sawyers, has offered her U.S. citizenship. Yet, she ends

her quote by reaffirming that she "still hopes to return to the *seleção*" (Beraldo E6, N.D.). Mentioned to the reporter in this order, Sissi's comments suggest that her offer of citizenship in the U.S. proves that she is worthy of competing with the *seleção Brasileira* in the Olympics. In other words, Sissi uses the offer of another (much coveted) nationality to affirm her place in Brazil, indicating that even as her home league has pushed her out, playing with the *seleção* is her top priority. Sissi's ambivalence about her nationality tells a more nuanced transnational story, which includes multiple affects, tradeoffs, and logics of citizenship.

It is critical to remember that if the U.S. is imagined as a sanctuary of sorts—as a refuge where adequately-compensated athletes can dedicate themselves to their trade, supported by a liberal society that cares more about their athletic skills than their feminine presentation—it is the unevenness of global financial infrastructure that sets the parameters for such a space. One player, Katia, makes clear that "if the conditions were the same, I would be in Brasil...but that's not how it is" (Ochata 2001, C4). Katia's statement emphasizes that athletes do have agency, but her assertion also uncovers that U.S. teams take advantage of unlevel playing fields to attract the athletic talent that then bolsters their own national profile. Writing for the Folha de São Paulo, Eduardo Ohata quotes Jody Mecham, the director of public relations for the San Francisco CyberRays in saying "we want the best athletes. So, for foreigners the best way to the WUSA [women's soccer league] is through their national teams." In an athletic parallel to the academic "brain drain," the U.S. relies on national teams to find the talent so that they can import athletes and exploit their labor for local markets.

What makes the question of nationalism complex is that the U.S. is touted as the "greatest power among women" ("maior potencia entre as mulheres"; Bittencourt and Challupe 2001, 33) in soccer terms even as many of the players in women's leagues in the U.S. are from other places. For instance, in the same breath (in this case, on the same page), media outlets like *O Campeão da Rede* can show, side-by-side, such contradictory headlines as "the [U.S.] league promotes foreign invasion...besides the four Brazilians, 23 other foreign players are part of the WUSA league: five Chinese, five Norwegians, three Germans, four Canadians, two Swiss, one Japanese, one British, one Australian and one Nigerian" and "American women are the best in the world...the United States are considered THE country of women's soccer" (Alonso 2001). Furthermore, the migration of athletes is accompanied by an exchange of skills and styles that begin to blur and mix as international soccer stars play with and against one another. One article, for instance, brags that the four Brazilian players (Sissi, Katia Cilene, Roseli e Pretinha), who formed almost half of the starting lineup for the Bay Area Cyber Rays in 2001, are wowing fans in the United States (Fig. 1.9). Writing about the Brazilian women's performance in the season opener, the journalist observes: "accustomed to football force, with lots of running and competition, the *gringos'* jaws literally dropped in response to the *brasileiras* touches and assists" (Salgueiro 2001, 8). Here is further evidence of exchange: the U.S. league and its fans pay and cheer, and Brazilian players bring style, skill, and excitement. In the process of playing in the U.S., Brazilian athletes build strength, and the non-Brazilians they play with are in turn influenced by the flair of *futebol brasileiro*. Even while it may be framed as "U.S." women's soccer, it

is in fact transnational.

Brazilian media coverage of Sissi paints the U.S. as a haven for gender queer and more masculine presenting women, while simultaneously describing a Brazil that is so hostile to "masculinized" athletes that they must either accept this prejudice or leave. While Sissi's experiences of gender bias in Brazil versus California are certainly legitimate, the idea that the U.S. is more "queer friendly" is a discourse that has also been used to support U.S. supremacy. To explore what this imagining of sanctuary means in terms of U.S. hegemony, I turn to Jasbir Puar's idea of "U.S. sexual exceptionalism." Exceptionalism, as defined by Puar, refers to discourses that both mark the U.S. as exceptional and that allow the U.S. to act exceptionally, thereby justifying often violent and unilateral state actions. To apply these concepts to Sissi's coverage: marking the U.S. as an oasis for queer folk hides the discrimination that many LGBTQ people in the US face. As Inderpal Grewal notes, this form of exceptionalism also constructs the U.S. "as saviors and rescuers of the 'oppressed women'" (Puar 5, 2007). Painting the U.S. as a queer sanctuary masks the ways the U.S. state functions, in many cases, as an oppressor.

If on the one hand the Brazilian media's framing of Sissi's migration may feed into U.S. sexual exceptionalism, on the other hand, it is possible that the media and Sissi use such comparisons to fight for improved conditions within Brazilian women's soccer. Their critique, in other words, could be motivated by patriotism for their own nation rather than by support for the U.S. Sissi was perhaps the first high-profile Brazil woman soccer player to migrate semi-permanently to the United States, and maybe the only Brazilian player who has been explicitly vocal about how gender

norms influenced this migration. Many *futebolistas* have moved to and played in the United States since her migration in the late 1990s. The following section tracks some of these athletes' migrations and the discourse around women's soccer in Brazil and in the U.S. that evinces the ways players' national identities are transnationally constructed through comparison, movement, sport and gender.

Soccer's Transmigrants: Brazilian Futebolistas from 2000 – 2015

On June 1, 2015, a research team from the Centro de Referência do Futebol Brasileiro (the research center at the *Museu do Futebol*, the soccer museum) was invited to visit the Brazilian women's national soccer team at a training center in Itu, São Paulo, Brazil. The research visit preceded the team's participation in the FIFA Women's World Cup in Canada (June 5 - July 6, 2015). The principal investigator on this research team, journalist Aira Bonfim, video recorded interviews with twelve players from the Brazilian *seleção feminina;* I draw from this archive (with permission from the *Centro de Referência do Futebol Brasileiro*,) to read how players understand their migratory experiences. These interviews are a useful resource because they feature a conversation between Brazilians and meant for a Brazilian audience.

The interviewees are players from the *Seleção Permanente,* an experimental group of the best players in Brazilian women's soccer, picked to train for 6 months

before the Women's World Cup in Canada.[19] As could be expected from athletes of this caliber, they have long athletic histories. Also typical of professional Brazilian futebolistas (Rial 2014), every athlete has experience playing abroad, which was one of Bonfim's interview questions.[20] The exchanges I will focus on below are Bonfim's dialogue with interviewees about their time abroad and how it compares to their experiences with Brazilian soccer.

The players interviewed have much in common: they began playing between

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[19] I say experimental because this group was an assembled by the *Confederação Brasileira de Futebol* (the Brazilian Confederation of Football, or CBF) in what many players called out as an attempt to condense years of training into six months. In the Bonfim's interview with Cristiane, for instance, the player recognized that the Japanese women's team had worked for six years leading up to their World Cup victory in 2011. Rather than invest in *futebol feminino* in a long term and sustainable way, the CBF instead created a short list of elite Brazilian players and they trained together for only half of one year before the 2015 WWC.

[20] Bonfim's interviews comprised a series of questions, with some deviations, depending on the responsiveness of the interviewee about their soccer origin story, incidents of prejudice or machismo, experiences playing on national teams, experiences playing abroad, predictions about outcomes in the *Confederação Brasileira de Futebol,* if they win the 2015 FIFA Women's World Cup, whether they knew of the 40 year ban on women's soccer in Brazil, and would they provide a quick blurb to advertise the Museum's upcoming exhibition on Women's Soccer.

ages four and seven, they left home to play at fourteen, they have played abroad (outside of Brazil) at some point in their careers. Many played with boys, and were the only girls to play in their family, neighborhood, or league, until they joined established women's teams in São Paulo. Ten of the twelve interviewed had played in the United States and three of these ten came to the U.S. on a university scholarship.

When asked to compare their experiences in Brazil and the U.S., all interviewees spoke of a difference in how the game is played, and they described distinctions in playing style in similar ways. North Americans play with "strength," "force," and "focus" and Brazilians play with "skill," "creativity," and "fun." Several players contrasted the unique, individual talent Brazilian players possessed with the unity and teamwork of North Americans. Francielle, for example affirmed differences, while arguing against a simplistic ranking:

> It's not about imitating, it's not that they are better than us, but I think the organization, the structure, yes these are better than us...We see girls there, 4 or 5 years old, already starting. And here, we start really late. So I think they [the U.S.] are a great power, it's not by accident that they win. But we can get there. In terms of individual talent, without a doubt Brazil is way in the front. But we lose in the *colectivo*. They know they are not so good individually, but as a collective they are strong. Obedience, discipline, this makes a difference. In these ways we sometimes lose a bit.
> ("Seleção Permanente Brasileira: Francielle", interview by Aira Bonfim, accessed January 8, 2017.)

The way to tap into the potential of Brazilian women's soccer, according to Fran, is to combine this individual talent with collective organizational strength.

Another player, Rafaela, speaks to the ways the U.S. women's leagues seek and encourage these differences and then use them, potentially for profit:

> We can't be the *Americanas* (the North American soccer players), because they already have the profile of the *Americanas* there. He [the coach of the Boston Breakers] said he doesn't want us to be the same as them. He wants us to go and play Brazilian soccer, because that is what is needed, the cadence of

> Brazilian players, the technique, ability, creativity. Because they don't have that, they are very mechanized. What they are told to do, they will do 100% correct. But to go outside of what they are asked, they aren't able to quickly think of another possibility, of another play. Brazilians no, Brazilians are very improvised. And the structure, too, yeah? The American league is one of the strongest in the world. You see the power they have there. You go to a stadium, there are so many more people than here, many kids. You spend 30 minutes giving autographs after the game ends. Like 300 kids who come to tell you how cool the game was. They have your shirts for sale, kids buy your shirt. The [Boston] Breakers just made a cool shirt that says "Breaker Brazileiras" on the front, and then the back of the shirt has the name of Brazilian players. So when people go to the stadium, they know they have the Brazilian women playing, and they want the Brazilian women's shirt. I get chills just thinking about it, because it's really cool. Imagine if Brazil was like this.
> ("Seleção Permanente Brasileira: Rafaela," interview by Aira Bonfim, accessed January 8, 2017.)

I share this quote because Rafaela articulates clearly the essentialized notions of Brazilian versus U.S. *futebol* that the majority of the interviewees describe. Whether or not these accounts hold truths, they certainly reflect national stereotypes about *ginga,* the swing, of Brazil compared to the rigidity of the U.S. These characteristics, of course, depend on a comparison to define their own style. Rafaela's quote points out the mutual influence between Brazil and the U.S.: Brazilian players discuss how they are benefiting from multicultural experiences. Yet, it is largely a one-sided exchange in terms of the flow of players: ultimately the U.S. is receiving and profiting from the most skilled players. The Breakers shirt is also an interesting example of transnational exchange, because on the one hand, it is an homage to the team's Brazilian players and a recognition of where they come from. On the other hand, you could read this cynically as one U.S. women's league team asserting its dominance by advertising its acquisitions—Brazilian teams, after all, do not acquire U.S. players in the same way. Furthermore, leagues display their international base

only at the moment when marketers recognize the possibility for profit.[21] In moments of competition like the Olympics or the Women's World Cup, when nations are performing on an international stage in competition with one another, this internal contradiction—of Brazilian players who train and play with U.S. teams at every other moment besides these international events—are downplayed. Interviewees from the *Seleção Permanente 2015* suggest that women's athletics reveals how sports can both strengthen and undermine the nation and how soccer is linked to global capital, even as these flows must work through the nation-state.

Through interviews with the two players (Aline and Marta) who are from neither the Southern nor Southeastern regions of Brazil (all other players are from these two regions), regional hierarchies also become clearer. While athletic talent comes from all over Brazil, as the country's economic hub, São Paulo (and the southern region, more generally) is home to the most well-endowed soccer teams and clubs. Regionalism, in the case of Brazil, is also racialized. São Paulo, located in the South, was largely shaped by European migration while the people in Brazil's Northeastern region are predominantly of African and indigenous descent. São Paulo's economic success, which "formed the basis for a national project that implied a hierarchy of regions and situated São Paulo at the center of the Brazilian nation," has bonded associations between whiteness and civilization, progress and modernity,

[21] In this case, Boston has a large Portuguese immigrant community. Marketers may recognize this as an opportunity to highlight Brazilian players, whom local populations will be especially excited to cheer for.

according to historian Barbara Weinstein (2015, 9). Using discourses of difference to generate policies that solidify and exacerbate regional inequalities, the *Nordeste* (Northeast) became São Paulo's "other," which SP used to create its own racialized exceptionalism. While players do not name regional differences in racial terms, they talk about the Northern and Southern regions as if they are separate countries.

The difference in resources and opportunities between these regions is evident in multiple ways including access to women's soccer leagues. For Aline, who was born in Macapá, Amapá, in the Amazon region, women's soccer was imagined as a reality only in the U.S. When asked, for instance, whether she grew up watching regional soccer or knew of Brazilian women's teams, she replied "I don't remember seeing anything from here in Brazil. For me, women's soccer didn't exist in Brazil, if I wanted to play I would have to go to the United States, because in our country we had nothing." In Brazil, it was only once her family moved to Rio de Janeiro that she was recruited to play professionally in a women's league in São Paulo. The best known Brazilian player in the world, Marta Vieira da Silva (known by her first Marta), is from Dois Riachos, Alagoas in the North East. Similar to Aline, she did not have possibility for a career until moving to Rio and then to São Paulo at age fourteen. In terms of *futebol feminino,* Rio and São Paulo represent a "first world" within their own country, which undermines the notion of a cohesive nation-state and points to the fragility of nation as a meaningful unit.

Conclusions: Toward Structural Change

In Bonfim's 2015 interview with Cristiane, one of Brazil's leading scorers and

athlete-activists, the player spoke about the financial hardships women athletes endure.[22] People see women playing for the national team, Cristiane said, and "they think we're doing well…Just because we're on TV playing in the Olympics people don't understand that we are not the same as the men's team." While futebolistas are representing Brazil with pride, "many in [their home] country do not reciprocate this pride." Players feel this way, according to Cristiane, because of the precarity of their lives. To be a professional futebolista is to experience a total lack of job security. Even top tier athletes like Cristiane who has "three Olympic medals at home" depend on "free treatment from friends who are physiotherapists" because they do not even have this security provided by the national league. As a step toward redistributing resources to the women's game, Cristiane called for women to assume leadership roles: as directors, as representatives on institutional commissions, as marketers and as coaches.

The call for a woman coach was answered in 2017 when Emily da Cunha Lima became the first woman to become head coach the seleção feminina. Six months later, however, Lima was fired with little explanation from the CBF (Panja 2017). In an emotional statement made public on YouTube Cristiane quit in protest of Lima's firing and over the general mistreatment of women in futebol (Masar 2017). Five players from the national team joined her, also quitting in protest.

Led by Sissi and one other player Marcia Tafarel, eight former players from Brazil's seleção issued an open letter to the CBF. The letter denounces Lima's firing

[22] Cristiane is one of the few openly lesbian players on the *seleção.*

as well as the inequalities and injustice suffered by *futebolistas.* In the letter players decried "poor treatment of women as leaders and players," "the failure of the CBF over many years to provide meaningful opportunities to the players to progress into leadership," which has led to an absence in women to make decisions about their game, and "the failure to support and nurture" the modality at all levels, "from the grassroots up, in Brazil" (Boquete 2017). In a show of transnational feminist solidarity among women footballers, eight players from other Women's National Teams (México, Australia, USA, Sweden, and England) signed the letter and added their own declarations of indignation and support for the Brazilian player's actions.

In a country known for being soccer mad, futebol feminino has too long been repressed, despite the sport's growing popularity. Women have not benefitted from the institutional structures that support the men's game. On the contrary, futebolistas have had to fight against multiple forms of oppression. These include a forty-year ban against futebol feminino. Another major exclusionary force is the pressure towards binary configurations of gender. These, combined with Brazil's legacy of eugenics and the anti-black market logics of beautification, have contributed to the whitening and feminization of the sport. Vibrant transnational movements of athlete-activists have emerged, calling for recognition and for egalitarian redistribution of resources. As futebol feminino struggles for visibility, then, it must remain attendant to gendered and racialized exclusions that have accompanied terms of inclusion.

Chapter Two: Trans(form)ing Futebol

Trans(form)ing Futebol[23]

> "I say soccer saved my life because I always liked to play futebol, and I view in the MBB a possibility to realize my dream that was to be a player on a team where the people understand me, and that I could play futebol happily…Without anyone bullying me, or trying to hit me during the game because of this, you know? And I think it was futebol because it's the sport I love the most. I think just as every Brazilian likes futebol, I have a love, a huge passion, for futebol…
> But there are several other issues behind it all; the media and society are always refusing to show how much we suffer on the day to day. We kill one lion a day just to stay alive, and we have just one day a week that we can smile without fear".
>
> -Raphael H. Martins, founder of the *Meninos Bons de Bola*

I first met Rapha, Pietro and Pedro, members of Brazil's first transexual men's soccer team *Meninos Bons de Bola* (MBB, or Soccer Star Boys), on a bus *en route* to the Brazilian women's soccer final on July 20, 2017 at the Barueri stadium in São Paulo, Brazil. The *Museu do Futebol* had paid for the bus as part of their campaign to increase the visibility of women's soccer, and I was there to observe that campaign as well as to seek research contacts. As we departed from the Pacaembu stadium where the football museum is housed, the director began a round of introductions. The last people to introduce themselves were Rapha, Pietro and Pedro. Raphael H. Martins

[23] The term Trans(form)ing is inspired by the title of the 2018 DC Queer Studies Symposium: Trans*(form)ing Queer. Also inspired by the symposium, this paper explores the relationship between trans and queer.

(Rapha), the founder and captain of the MBB, told me then that it was the first time he had set foot in a soccer stadium since the police assaulted him at a game two years before. Recounting the assault, he shared that the police stopped him as he entered the stadium. Apparently, they were skeptical about the differences between the physical appearance of the person who stood before them and the indicated sex and presentation of the person captured in Rapha's photo ID card. The security guards took him to a room, locked the door, and only released him after they had forcibly "verified" that what was under his shirt and in his pants matched the sex indicated on his ID. I relate this story, one that he has also shared during interviews with the media, because it points to the daily violence that gender nonconforming people, and especially those who are also black, face in Brazil. Indeed, as recent statistics suggest, Brazil is the deadliest place in the world for trans people.[24] But his story also suggests that *futebol* is a crucial site where the pressure to adhere to binaries is often viciously enforced.

This chapter continues an exploration of questions taken up in the last chapter and introduces new ones that trans participation in sports generates. If Brazil is *o país de futebol*, the nation of soccer, what does it mean that access to this national pastime is so vehemently policed along gendered lines? Considering the policing of gender and sexuality in soccer, how is trans existence seen and understood within futebol? And, given the pervasiveness of anti-trans violence in Brazil, why and how do trans athletes like Rapha appeal to futebol to affirm their existence? I recount the story of

[24] For statistics see https://transrespect.org/en/map/trans-murder-monitoring/.

Brazil's first trans men's soccer team to explore what happens when trans futebolistas unite to demand access to the national sport. Through their process of formation and continued existence, what are the ways the MBB both queer soccer and uphold its hegemonic formations?

In the opening quote, from a conversation I had with Rapha, he shares (as he has many times) that futebol saved his life. Specifically, the *Meninos Bons de Bola* saved his life. The MBB team is, for him, a lifeline that makes space for transexual (the term they use) men athletes to come together and to play, joyfully. It is lifesaving, Rapha asserts, to have access to a sporting environment free from immediate physical violence, and where he is both understood and able to be happy. Such an environment gives him access to futebol, the Brazilian dream. Rapha's challenges are shared by other trans people. There are around three thousand trans men in Brazil, according to a survey conducted by trans activist João Nery (who was the first trans man to undergo reassignment surgery in Brazil over 30 years ago) together with the *Empresa Brasileira de Comunicação* (EBC, or Brazilian Communication Company). The lack of representation, low numbers, minimal rights and invisibility of transmen contributes to their marginalization not only in the arena of medicine but also in circuits that discuss gender and human rights, and even LGBT communities.[25] To remedy their invisibility, the founders of MBB turned to the most Brazilian of solutions: they formed a soccer team.

[25] This question of numbers becomes increasingly worrisome, as President Jair Bolsonaro has stated that minorities should conform to the will and patterns of the

Rapha founded the *Meninos Bons de Bola* in 2016, shortly before we met. At the time, he was working in São Paulo's Reference Center for Defense of Diversity *(Centro de Referência e Defesa da Diversidade, CRD, da Secretaria Municipal de Assistência e Desenvolvimento Social*) as a socio-educational counselor. While working there, Rapha noticed that even in a center dedicated to gender and sexual minorities, services and opportunities for people like him--the "T" in LGBT--were largely absent. Responding to a lack of support for trans masculine members of the LGBT community, Rapha formed a soccer team to combat the isolation. According to Rapha, there were also psychological needs fulfilled by such a team, since self-harm is a prevailing problem in the trans community. The idea to create a team in fact came out of his conversation between with psychologist Moira Escorse. In an article in Portal o Día (2017) Rapha relates that he "researched and saw that a lot of transgender boys had attempted suicide and were in and out of depression, like [him]." Together with Moira, he thought: "why not start an activity that unites these boys like a family, to talk about hormones, surgeries and girlfriends?"[26] From the

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majority, an assertion that is part the current right-wing regime's larger attack on LGBT people, Afro-Brazilians, indigenous communities, poor people, and women. I will directly discuss the implication of Brazil's 2018 election in my concluding chapter, but have left it out of the main body of the chapter to stay true to the contexts in which I am writing.

[26] This comment indicates an assumption of heterosexuality, which, later, members of the team will dispute.

outset Rapha imagined the MBB community not only as a team that gathers once a week to play, but also as a support group to help players navigate a world that is largely hostile to their gender identities, particularly while many undergo medical transition. Today the MBB has 32 active members who play recreational soccer and who compete in "alternative" and LGBT amateur competitions, mostly in São Paulo.

This chapter recounts the conditions under which this first transmen's soccer team formed in Brazil, the specific challenges they faced, and what soccer means to them. Some of the struggles of the MBB are similar to those of the women-identified and cis gay male athletes featured in other chapters in this dissertation in that questions of visibility and mainstreaming are central to their soccer stories. However, the MBB's experiences are also distinct because both visibility and "mainstreaming" mean something different for trans athletes. The founding and development of the MBB expresses their desire to be seen and it illuminates the relationship between visibility and violence. The existence of the MBB team also calls attention to distinctions between transing and queering soccer. Drawing from an ethnography of the team conducted over three phases from July 2017 – May 2019, and supported by an archive of their media coverage, I consider the ways the team's response to violence and their campaign for visibility exposes the limits and possibilities for queering soccer.

Methods and Sources

Over the course of my interactions with the MBB between 2017 and 2019, I drew on queer and feminist ethnography as well as methods from media studies and

visual studies to explore how trans athletes navigate Brazil's rigid gender binaries. I classify my interactions with the MBB in three chronological phases.

The initial meeting on the bus *en route* to the women's soccer final marked the first stage of my research and relationship with the *Meninos Bons de Bola,* and with the team's founder, Rapha, in particular. The team was a just under year old when I met them in 2017. At this stage, July – August 2017, I conducted conversations with the team's founding members and board of directors, and I drew from our experiences during the 2017 Women's World Conference in Florianopolis (which I attended with Pedro and Rapha) as well as on my observations from two team practices. After the women's final where I met three players from the MBB, I went to their team's soccer practice on Sunday morning at the *sindicato dos bancarios* near the Praça de Sé metro stop in São Paulo's city center. There were 11 players at that particular practice (and one new person, who came to try it out) plus one of the player's children. I introduced myself as a graduate student in *Estudos Feministas* (feminist studies), I talked about my project, and I made clear that I welcomed the chance to speak to any player who had experiences in *futebol* they wished to share with me. I distributed IRB (Internal Review Board) informed consent forms (in Portuguese) that contained information about me, my project, institutional affiliations, and the contact information of my adviser (who also speaks Portuguese) as well as the IRB board. My IRB indicated that I would use pseudonyms when referring to the players. However, Rapha and Pedro, who are my primary interlocutors, wish for me to use their *nomes sociais,* their chosen names. For consistency, I also use the real names of players when referring to media coverage

that uses these names. Otherwise I use pseudonyms (with the exception of Rapha and Pedro).

The second stage of data collection, August 2017 - June 2018, was digital, after my return to the United States. From August 2017 to when I physically returned to São Paulo in July 2018, I followed the team's social medias (Facebook) as well as the personal accounts of the players themselves. In keeping with informed consent, I will not detail personal posts on social media (although I mention them generally) and will not use players names when referencing these. The team's Facebook account (which has 1,800 followers) is run by Raphael H. Martins, the founder and captain of the *Meninos Bons de Bola*. The official team account provides insight into the image they are cultivating as well as the fans who follow them. Comparing this account to the individual accounts of players sheds light on the multiple philosophies (re: identity, approach to sport and competition, etc.) within the team.

Another form of data collected during this phase of my involvement with the MBB is an oral history of Rapha. We communicated almost daily via WhatsApp and Skype over the course of a year, and have developed what can now be called a deep friendship. In our conversations, he shared both personal and team-related victories and struggles. These range from the small victories at Rapha's job to networking and funding opportunities for the team. Examples of challenges are difficulties with medical providers and growing tensions between him and another member of the team, Thiago, who was a co-captain of sorts. Rapha has asked me for advice and to help the team where possible, by reading and translating documents, for instance. Because of my many privileges and our very different life experiences, my

relationship with Rapha has frequently required me to reflect about the ethical navigation of our differences in power. Our relationship is built on mutual support, a fact that Rapha has reiterated: I use my position help the team in ways that are possible from my location and with my linguistic skills, and they, in turn, share experiences that help my research. Rapha's goals for the MBB are centered around visibility for transmen, and so he welcomes "outsiders" who share this goal. My extended engagement with Rapha's life sheds light on my research questions around transness, blackness, and futebol in intimate ways. Yet, this form of deep and personal research also presents risks. Scenarios where this approach could limit my work have already presented themselves: my care and respect for Rapha has made it difficult, for instance, for me to reflect on some of his shortcomings as a leader. I have tried to balance this potential limitation by triangulation: obtaining various other accounts of controversial situations, particularly about Rapha's leadership.

The final stage of data collection was three weeks of in-person ethnographic research conducted July 13 - August 4, 2018 in São Paulo. It comprised a focus group with the MBB, 11 individual interviews, observation of two tournaments and three practices, and three group meetings, as well as any follow up between then and the writing of this chapter in May 2019. One of the meetings was to lay the groundwork for MBB's becoming an NGO. I also conducted a focus group after practice on Sunday, July 15, 2018. The benefits of focus groups are that they allow me to hear people talk amongst themselves. They are useful for engaging with a range of participants versus one-on-one interviews. On the benefits and drawbacks of focus groups, Patricia Lina Leavy writes that some researchers believe that focus groups

elicit more "truthful" responses, because people will speak freely in front of their peers, and the immense power of the interviewer necessarily dissipates (2007). Others, according to Leavy, believe the opposite, that people are not willing to be as forthright in a group setting and that individual conversation would yield results that are more reflective of group dynamics than the individual's actual personal views. I used both focus group and individual interviews and reflect on the differences in findings. Already I have noted a shift in personae used by interviewees when I speak one-on-one versus in front of their friends. For those MBB players that have sex with women, for instance, I noticed a form of masculine posturing—speaking more loudly and sitting or standing in higher places (looking down on others as they speak)—that happens when they are in front of each other, but not one-on-one.

To complement my observational findings, I incorporate an archive of the MBB's media coverage, photographs, grant applications, and team information. I began compiling this archive together in July 2018 with several members of the team (there are currently 7 active contributors to the shared google drive), and we received initial support from staff at the *Museu do Futebol*. I necessarily draw on media coverage because it has been a part of the MBB since their inception: a reporting team was even there to cover their very first day of practice. The team did not have an incubation period to gather and reflect before they presented a public face to the world; their development and their representation happened simultaneously. Because mainstream representations of the team coincided with their formation, the two (their own self-fashioning and the media's portrayal of them) became intertwined in ways difficult to disentangle.

Statistical information about the team comes from a google survey created and distributed by the MBB board on November 14, 2018, to which 25 players responded. The survey, which comprises 24 questions and asks members to upload a photo, is to my knowledge, the first of its kind (see Appendix 1 for full list of questions). Given the relatively small numbers of trans identified men in Brazil, the data gathered from the MBB's in-depth survey, while imperfect, is nonetheless significant. Any information I share about Rapha and Pedro is with their explicit permission to do so. All translation, from the spoken or written Portuguese of the team to the written English in this chapter, is my own.

On Visibility and Violence

> "The publication of the book takes place at a time of increasing visibility of transgender people and their issues. But also in times when the representation of alterity in relation to these people is often made by cis people, in order to dehumanize them to the point of making unfeasible a recognition of ethico-moral bond with them and, most seriously, in order to make possible their elimination."
> -Juliana Perucchi (2014, translation by author) from *Transfeminismos: Teorias e Practicas*

"We are living in a time of trans visibility. Yet we are also living in a time of anti-trans violence."
-Gossett, Reina, Eric A. Stanley, and Johanna Burton (2017) from *Trap Door: Trans Cultural Production and the Politics of Visibility*

Questions around trans representation raised by the authors above present the paradox of visibility: in both Brazil and the United States, where the authors are located, an increase in trans representation in the early 2000s has been accompanied by an increase in violence against trans and gender non-conforming people. The positive correlation between visibility and violence is surprising because visibility is typically considered a way to humanize, to foster acceptance, and to decrease

brutality against populations that are unseen, marginalized, and misunderstood. The fact that visibility coincides with violence here suggests their relationship is complex. In theory, if *invisibility* is a form of oppression, then *visibility* should be a step toward liberation. In practice, however, being seen is rife with contradiction.

The MBB's trajectory illustrates multiple synchronous connections between trans representation and anti-trans violence. Their high level of representation in media outlets such as UOL, one of Brazil's most visited sites, went alongside with their being targeted in negative ways. From the very moment of their formation, the MBB received media coverage of their team: journalists were present to report on the MBB on their very first day of practice. After Rapha set a date and time for the first practice—*Parque da Juventude* in São Paulo on August 28, 2016—and spread the word through targeted LGBT social media groups on WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram, the first practice brought together between 15 - 30 (the numbers vary by report) trans men. A journalist from UOL attended the practice and reported on it.[27] The running theme in these first representations of the team was that it was

[27] Their first practice takes place two days before President Dilma Rousseff is removed from office on August 31, 2016. Many scholars and activists, including the former President Rousseff (during a talk I attended on April 25, 2017 at George Washington University), refer to this so-called impeachment as a constitutional coup (Rousseff, 2017). Rightwing mobilization and removal of Rousseff marks a shift in politics--from the relatively left-leaning regime the *meninos* were born out of to the conservative administration that consolidates power at the end of 2018.

transphobic violence that brought the team together. In other words, both the MBB and the violence that brought them together was rendered *concurrently* visible to wider audiences in Brazil.

The fact of media visibility was a good thing, from MBB's perspective. The goals of the MBB's visibility campaign are both inward- and outward-facing: Martins feels that making his struggles public and introducing the existence of other trans men is a homing strategy to bring people like him together in a community of love and support. The MBB's publicity is also outward facing, to show people in São Paulo and Brazil that trans people are human. Remembering the first day of practice, Martins shares "after the first game, we sat in a circle and each one of us shared a little of our story. It was really strong. We are *invisible* still and we have the need to speak. Today, if one of us shares negative feelings, we embrace them. We get mad, we celebrate, we incentivize. We have become a familia" (my emphasis). Drawing on his own experiences of depression and self-harm, Rapha sees the invisibility and isolation of transmen as deadly. The need to be seen is part of a survival strategy.

Many of the players feel that *visual images* of the team are the main component of becoming seen, even if the results are mixed. For instance, I asked Pedro what it means to him to see his photographs in the news.

> Pedro: When I see my photos in a story or an article I feel grateful, not for the fact of appearing, but because it empowers me, I feel more strong to confront everything, and principally because I know that the story of the team is reaching people that have never had contact with trans men.
> Me: Does it always have this effect?
> Pedro: Ultimately exposition also has its negative sides, sometimes I feel exposed and I am afraid of aggressive reactions or to experience some embarrassment.
> Me: Do you notice any differences based on who's taking the picture?

> Pedro: Yes depending on the media I think there's a difference; some don't communicate/translate the message correctly, the Midia Ninja in my opinion did the best job of showing our story, there wasn't difference between what I said and what was published, but this has happened with others [media outlets].
> -WhatsApp, Saturday, December 16, 2018

Pedro describes here the double-edged sword that is visibility. On the one hand, seeing himself portrayed in the news motivates him, and he feels good knowing that his story might be changing people's perceptions of trans men. On the other hand, Pedro recognizes that being public could expose him to danger; not everyone who reads the article or watches the report will react positively. He also acknowledges that the quality of coverage will vary by media outlet and by reporter. Midia Ninja (Independent Narratives, Journalism and Action), the outlet Pedro refers to, "is a decentralized network of volunteer journalists who produce and disseminate content based on collaborative work and online sharing" in Brazil and abroad (from NINJA website). It is the most prominent independent news source in Brazil, of exceptional quality, and one of the few independent platforms to cover the MBB. All the reports on the MBB were written and produced by cis gender people, although the Ninja story was written and photographed by a friend. In other words, the identity and affiliation of those who cover the MBB matters in terms of how they are represented. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the MBB feel more satisfied about the coverage produced by those who are more similar or who are closer (in terms of political affiliation or friendship networks) to them.

In Brazil's profit-driven media environment, outlets are more motivated by clicks than by accurate representation. So while the MBB have clear goals for their media coverage, ultimately they do not determine how reporters will convey their

story. The MBB may have an idea of what visibility could accomplish, but they have no guarantees that they will be represented or received according to their wishes. I read this power-laden process of representation using the framework Shari Stone-Mediatore offers: she describes stories as "meaning-making practices" that shape the making of "common-sense" that regulate subsequent stories; in this way, they not only describe but also *constitute* reality (2003, 132). Certain people have more access to telling stories than others, and in this and other ways stories and/or their absence "rationalize and reinforce social hierarchies" (Stone-Mediatore 2003, 135).[28] With this understanding of the power of narratives to both depict and shape reality, I do not expect media coverage to represent MBB with full accuracy. Rather, I draw on coverage of the MBB to understand how and what exactly reporters and journalists make visible. What happens to the substance of MBB when the coverage is all about their visual image? What are the stories the media tells about the MBB, and how do these differ from the stories the players tell about themselves? How do these revelations, in turn, both reflect and shape gender, race and class in Brazil?

[28] For other takes on situated storytelling, see Thomas King's *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative* (2005) which argues against any one truth, because it doesn't exist, and advocates instead for multiple versions of it. Also, I read these narratives of resistance with the critical eye influenced by Lila Abu-Lughod (1990), who reminds us to ask what resistance to power can reveal about the nature of power itself.

1.1. The Story of MBB's Founding: Formed in Community, Forged in Violence

On August 28, 2016 a team of reporters was at the *Parque da Juventude* for the MBB's first practice. Two weeks later, the sports section of UOL, the sixth most visited site in Brazil, published the first article ever written about the team. I focus on this article as an important example of how a dominant narrative about MBB has been framed. The article is a flashy, interactive, digital story that introduces "the team of warriors" (which is the title of the piece, with subheading "The *Meninos Bons de Bola* wants to be the first transsexual team in Brazil to participate in a league") as one borne out of the "difficulties faced by its members." The web formatting is such that each segment of the report takes up the whole screen, and as the reader scrolls down, a new segment appears. It is a story in 16 parts, containing three videos (three parts of the story), images paired with quotes, and 7 sections with a few paragraphs of writing. After introducing the team, journalist Felipe Pereira describes the park where the MBB held their initial team practice: the pitch has no proper goal posts and marking lines are erased. The third "panel" is a video of Martins speaking about the sexualized, transphobic violence that led to the team's formation. The images and text dialogue in a way that individualizes anti-trans violence and presents futebol as a corrective to systemic voids. This is a narrative presenting soccer in a salvific role: soccer lightens their suffering. I trace an example of this *soccer as savior* narrative below by laying out audio and visuals side by side, before turning to an analysis of the broader implications of this discursive move.

Audio	Visuals
"My name is Raphael, I am 29 years old, I'm the founder of the *Meninos Bons de Bola,* the first trans men team in Brazil.	Rapha laces up his shoes and rolls up his socks.
At the end of last year	Close up of Rapha's face, looking down, unsmiling, then he looks up and directly into the camera
I was raped	Distance shot of him entering the pitch between a metal gate with lush vegetation in the background
In the moment I was raped,	Close up of Rapha, then the camera zooms out and comes into focus to show a circle of players (a line of 5) warming up, doing "butt kicks"
the guy, a cis guy,[29] the whole time was saying that I needed to be a woman, that this would turn me into a little woman (*mulherzinha)*	We see Rapha, filmed from the waist up, saying these words. His eyes are looking up and to the right of the camera. He is wringing his hands as he speaks. The text "Raphael Martins: Transexual Player" comes onto the bottom right of the screen.
And that was the part that was the most shocking, you know? I tried to commit suicide,	The camera starts at his feet then pans up to his unsmiling face.
by taking the medicine that doctors had given me"	Returns to close-up of Rapha speaking.

After leading the introduction to Rapha as the founder of a trans men's soccer team as someone who survived rape, we learn in the next few seconds, that the rapist

[29] On other occasions, Rapha shared that it was a taxi driver who assaulted him in his cab.

was motivated by transphobia and misogyny. The effects of the rapist's violence on Rapha include depression and attempted suicide. Even as Rapha's voice is steady, we bear witness to his pain, communicated in his body language like the wringing of his hands. Our gaze is directed instead toward the soccer ball. The film continues:

Audio	Visuals
"It was bad, on the one hand,	Rapha looks at his outstretched left arm, holding a ball in his left hand then he looks directly into the camera.
it also ended up being good, let's say,	The film shows Rapha cradling the ball like a baby, looking down at it, then he looks up again, directly into the camera.
because	Over his speaking the screen shows an image of Rapha with the text "this was the third time Rapha attempted suicide. He also tried at ages 15 and 20."
it was when I thought of *futebol*	The film skips to image of him juggling a soccer ball with his feet.
because it's something I like a lot. And surveying the groups and stuff, asking if the guys wanted to play ball, whether they wanted to participate in a team or whatever, and that was where they said it would be cool. That was when I said, that's what I'll focus on then, *futebol*."	Hands reach into a duffel bag to grab blue pennies, players put them on, and there are a few seconds' footage of the teams scrimmaging. Funk music comes on and for a few seconds the music plays as images of feet kicking balls dances across the screen.

In this part of the film, images skip from Rapha talking into the camera about his suicide attempts to him juggling a soccer ball in a matter of seconds. As we hear about how soccer saved him, the visuals go from almost letting the ball drop from his hands to forcing the ball to life with his feet. In the footage, Rapha frames his assault in positive ways, pointing out that it drove him to start the team. However, in my

conversations with Rapha, it is clear that thoughts of ending his life have stayed with him since. In light of such pain, it may be more accurate to see futebol as a coping mechanism for survivors of assault rather than a "cure" for trauma and violence.

In the next sequence, the film is time-lapsed so the players form a line one by one, in rapid motion. The sped-up filming represents a fast forward out of the dark origin story and into futebol's bright future where the MBB are established and seen:

Audio	Visuals
"I imagine the team in the future as *reconhecido (*recognized, well-known). It could be professional or amateur, but the team being *reconhecido* for me will already be great."	First, 7 players file in and stand in the back row and then 5 enter and kneel in the front, as if to pose for a picture.

As the clip ends, a player throws in the ball from the sideline and there are a few seconds of scrimmaging as we hear:

Audio	Visuals
"Because by way of *futebol* I want to show this visibility, you know,	Players scrimmage.
visibility of transmen, show people that we exist that we're here.	Shot from the ground of the bottom half of Rapha's legs as he dribbles toward the camera, rolling the ball across the width of his body than passing it from one foot to another.
And that we are the same as everyone, we play sport, we study, we work, we have a normal life like anyone"	Rapha, from the waist up, talking. The short closes with the *meninos* playing, accompanied by funk music, and edited to show a collage of images spliced, pulsing and full of color.

This ending turns to visibility—which affirms transmasculine existence and humanity—as a solution for confronting anti-trans violence. Images of the team laughing and playing futebol, a scene many Brazilians will connect with, testifies to their normalcy.

As a whole, UOL's video clip illustrates and expands on the ways violence and visibility are intertwined in trans narratives and it points to the contradictions emerging from the team's representation. What the clip shows is that transphobic violence is the ingress into trans visibility, because in the case of the MBB, as in the case of many high-profile trans people, this violence is part of their personal and political founding stories.[30] Often, this is how trans people are introduced to mostly cis audiences. Rapha told me that he shares his survivor story in order to shock viewers out of their slumber. Consumers of media representations such as this film, however, are not allowed to dwell in the brutality. Violence is evoked and disavowed in the same 1 minute 30 second clip; a cisgender man rapes a trans man and the outcome is an inspirational soccer team. Soccer saves the victim. Because of the urge towards a progress narrative, this representation of trans existence in Brazil is, at best,

[30] Trans people's experiences of violence depend on a range of factors including class, race, geography, ability and more (Valentine 2006). Rapha's surviving this "corrective rape", for instance, may be more specific to transmen (and lesbian women). And although the driver's language is explicitly transphobic and misogynist, the nature of his aggression is also likely influenced by other aspects of Rapha's identity.

partial. In effect, this video illustrates several themes that emerge repeatedly in the media's portrayal of the team: it highlights in depoliticized terms the consequences of aggression, and references larger economic and political violence without pointing directly to them. It erases race by never making mention of it. In the next section, I turn to analyze other stories written about MBB to expand the soccer-as-savior narrative.

1.2. Individualization of Structural Violence

Seven of the twenty-three articles written in the first and second year of the MBB's existence (2016-2017) describe Rapha's assault by a taxi driver and Rapha's subsequent suicide attempt as his motivation for forming the MBB. Futebol, the articles narrate, gave Rapha a reason to live. Twenty of the articles from this period make reference to the multiple forms of transphobic, sexualized violence the *meninos* have suffered. The volume of references about brutality begs the question: when does the power of telling one's story cross the line into gratuitous violence? I do not have an easy answer to determine when that line is crossed, and I write about Rapha's rape in deference to his insistence that it be centered in his story. Sharing his experiences of violence is part of Rapha's activism on behalf of trans rights.

In each of the twenty pieces that mention violence, the writers and producers identify a single cis male aggressor, and each story ends with soccer as the reason for

the victim's survival.[31] One major issue with the way this story is presented, and what makes it sell as news, is that it has a neat beginning and an ending.[32] Rapha makes clear the transphobic motivations of his rapist—the man wants to turn him into a woman—, but by focusing on this single act, with no context or connections, the narration masks the systemic nature of sexualized violence against LGBT people and women.

My reading of this individualization of violence is informed by my feminist training that recognizes the personal as political (Snyder 2018, 4).[33] Anti-trans and misogynist violence is about more than individuals because personalized and systemic forms of aggression are inextricably linked.[34] Structures of gender-based

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[31] Other examples include Eric's story (from the same UOL piece): after Eric escapes an assault as a child, he enters the foster care system, and that's where he discovers soccer.

[32] See Stone-Mediatore for a discussion of "narrating events"

[33] By feminist education I mean both my formal education as a PhD in Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies as well as my work with the Women's Resource Center and shelter in Atlanta, Georgia where I was trained to be an advocate for survivors of domestic violence and where I worked as a volunteer for several years.

[34] Interpersonal violence refers to rape, domestic violence, and emotional and psychological abuse that occur within privatized relationships. State violence, also called structural violence, refers to injury caused by governments, institutions, business, or individuals who commit harm based on stereotypes. Structural violence

oppression shape individual existence, and vice versa. The terror of rape, for instance, dictates the terms of girls' and feminized subjects' lives from early on: what they wear, how they behave, where and when they move through the world, and who they interact with, are all impacted by the looming threat of sexual violence. Certainly, this threat is exacerbated for poor people, people of color, and members of the LGBT community. Feminists and LGBT people have fought (and continue to fight) for safety nets such as shelters and legal reforms. But ultimately, these measures are stopgaps; addressing, preventing and eliminating sexual violence requires systemic change. Thus, even while feminist and queer movements give voice to individualized forms of aggression, they also understand that in order to eradicate brutality we must focus on dismantling interconnected systems of oppression which promote, condone and facilitate misogynist, racist, homophobic and transphobic violence. It is this structural oppression that coverage of the MBB fails to fully account for.

Players on the MBB face numerous systemic barriers in the form of underemployment, lack of access to education and mental health care, and the fear of

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includes state violence, but extends beyond it to include economic and market/based violence. Feminist activists have drawn attention to the systemic violence-- rooted in historical processes and in social meanings ascribed to gender, race, class, sexuality, religion and nationality-- which undergird the individualized aggressions that many marginalized populations confront. To identify physical violence, coercive sex and abuse as *gendered* violence, recognizes these as acts of power, which both define and reinforce sexism and toxic gender norms.

violence. A survey conducted by members of the MBB on November 14, 2018, which 25 players responded to, sheds light on such barriers. The survey—which comprises twenty-three questions and asks members to upload a photo—was carried out so that if one of the *meninos* went missing, the team would have information to help find them. The mere fact of the study then, is a testament to the threat of violence. To my knowledge, no similar information has been gathered about trans men in Brazil, and their data gives a rare insight into the lives of trans men in São Paulo.

In terms of structural conditions, the educational and work-related histories of the *meninos* give insight into the precarious features of their lives. As Appendix 2 and 3 show in their lists of educational attainment and job type, nine out of twenty five of the players did not complete high school and for seven, this was their highest degree. Ten of the twenty-five surveyed are either unemployed or self-employed. Eight work in backhouse, minimum wage jobs. Seven have jobs that provide stability and an adequate salary. The MBB have shared stories about why it is difficult to find work. These include discrepancies between gender identity versus official documentation, intimidation and ridicule by coworkers, and in some cases threats of violence on the job. Rapha, for instance, dropped out of college when they refused to honor his chosen name and insisted on using his birth name. Another *menino* shared he was exhausted from work at a call center for the same reason: for 10 months he had to use his birth name and respond to caller's questions about 'why he sounded like a man if he had a woman's name'. The *meninos'* formal educational attainment and job prospects place many in insecure financial situations.

Clearly the structural constraints are such that a soccer team alone cannot be

expected to address them. Yet the coverage of the team continues to center soccer as a savior. Globo's (2017_09_01) seven-minute film story on the team after the MBB celebrated a year of existence touches on the difficulty the *meninos* have securing work as trans men. It features the team's only two employed players (at the time): Claúdio Galicia and Pietro Henrique. Both of their stories attest to what it is like to navigate the job market as a trans man. Galicia works in car repairs, and he talks about how his life has to be underground; the more visible someone trans becomes, the more society pushes them back into the "underworld," he states. Pietro works as a busboy in a LGBT-friendly restaurant. The owner of the restaurant is featured in the report saying that he wishes he had enough jobs for the hundreds of people who come to him seeking employment. Many trans people solicit work at the restaurant because its application form provides the ability to list one's chosen name (called "social name" in Brazil) and gender identity rather than the one on their legal documentation. The lack of access to sources of livelihood is a form of systemic violence. This is only superficially acknowledged in the report; it highlights two players who *have* jobs rather than the many who do not. Furthermore, by focusing on two employed players and then the MBB, the narrative suggests that the soccer teams leads to, or can help with, employment. In reality, unemployment or the fear of unemployment is a constant threat that haunts the team and its members.[35]

[35] While doing fieldwork in 2018, there were massive labor strikes and unemployment in São Paulo. A new labor law passed under interim-president Michel Temer that removed labor protections for workers employed temporarily (less than

The Globo film prominently features the team's oldest member Claúdio Galicia, age 45, affectionately called *Vovô*, or grandad (2017_09_01). Globo's storytelling makes several of the same discursive moves the UOL story does, in terms of panning back and forth between individual stories of athletes and the team practicing soccer. Reporters begin the story "there are many stories of suffering, of difficulties of various types… this is how it was with…". Then they introduce Galicia as someone who now works in a speedometer repair shop. But his journey to becoming an "employed citizen" was a long one, the reporter's voice tells us over melodramatic music. When Galicia's voice begins, the camera shot is one of him looking down. He shares that he was abused by the man he thought was his father. He makes a joke about his life being like a Mexican soap opera, especially in the moment when he discovered that man was not his father. Only when he jokes does the camera zoom in on his face.[36]

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three months). The impacts were immediate in the lives of the MBB and so many working poor: Pedro, for instance, was fired from his job during my last week in SP, on his third month of employment. Unfortunately, with the election of conservative, free-market politician Bolsonaro, this reality is only set to worsen.

[36] In both Galicia's and Raphas' cases, the camera does not look them in the eye when they are talking about rape. This visualization speaks to the reality of sexual violence, which is both omnipresent and evasive. It is everywhere and yet the gaze refuses to look it in the eye. Furthermore, the gaze is on the feminized (regardless of gender) victim. Noting the evasion of the camera, however, is a way to return the

After profiling Galicia and another player's jobs, the story returns to Vovô's trauma. Galicia shares that his presumed father's abuse tormented him for years. Many trans people, he states, can't "take the pressure" and they attempt suicide or self-mutilate. He continues:

> "When I found the *Meninos Bons de Bola*, I…wow.. because I was able to overcome on my own, but the boys who are there, many need that [the MBB]. They need the support to be able to live because they haven't done surgery yet, they haven't yet started hormone therapy. Ultimately, they don't yet feel part of society"[37]

Again, violence is individuated, with one perpetrator to condemn. The narrative masks the multiple and interlocking oppressions the *meninos* face. Galicia addresses the social death that comes from the marginalization and isolation so many trans men experience, and recognizes the MBB as a source of support. He speaks to his own path of self and societal acceptance, made possible by hormone therapy and surgery.[38] For the purposes of this chapter, however, what is noticeable about Galicia's statement is that shallow media narratives describe the MBB as filling, and indeed correcting, systemic voids, without fully describing these absences.

Another way to identify the *meninos'* poverty is to see where they live. The

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gaze only to find it cannot meet the look.

[37] There are parts of this story that Galicia either doesn't share or Globo chooses not to report on. When he ran away from home, Galicia lived for years in the streets, was addicted to drugs, and suffered physical violence from multiple people. Only the trauma resulting from his father's abuse is recounted.

[38] For an exploration of the pharmaceutical (Pharmacopornographic Era) and gendered implications of testosterone see Paul Preciado's *Testo Junkie* (2013).

blue houses are where the MBB reside, the green tag is the *parque da juventude* where they held practices in the first year, and the pink marker is where they currently practice. The city of São Paulo, like many urban centers, is divided by class, which is often racialized. A quick glance at the map below (FIG 1) reveals that most players live on the outskirts of the city, referred to as the *periferias*. In Portuguese, this spatial designation is also an identity marker, and many of the *meninos* identify as *periferico.* Players endure long and costly commutes to make it to weekly practice.

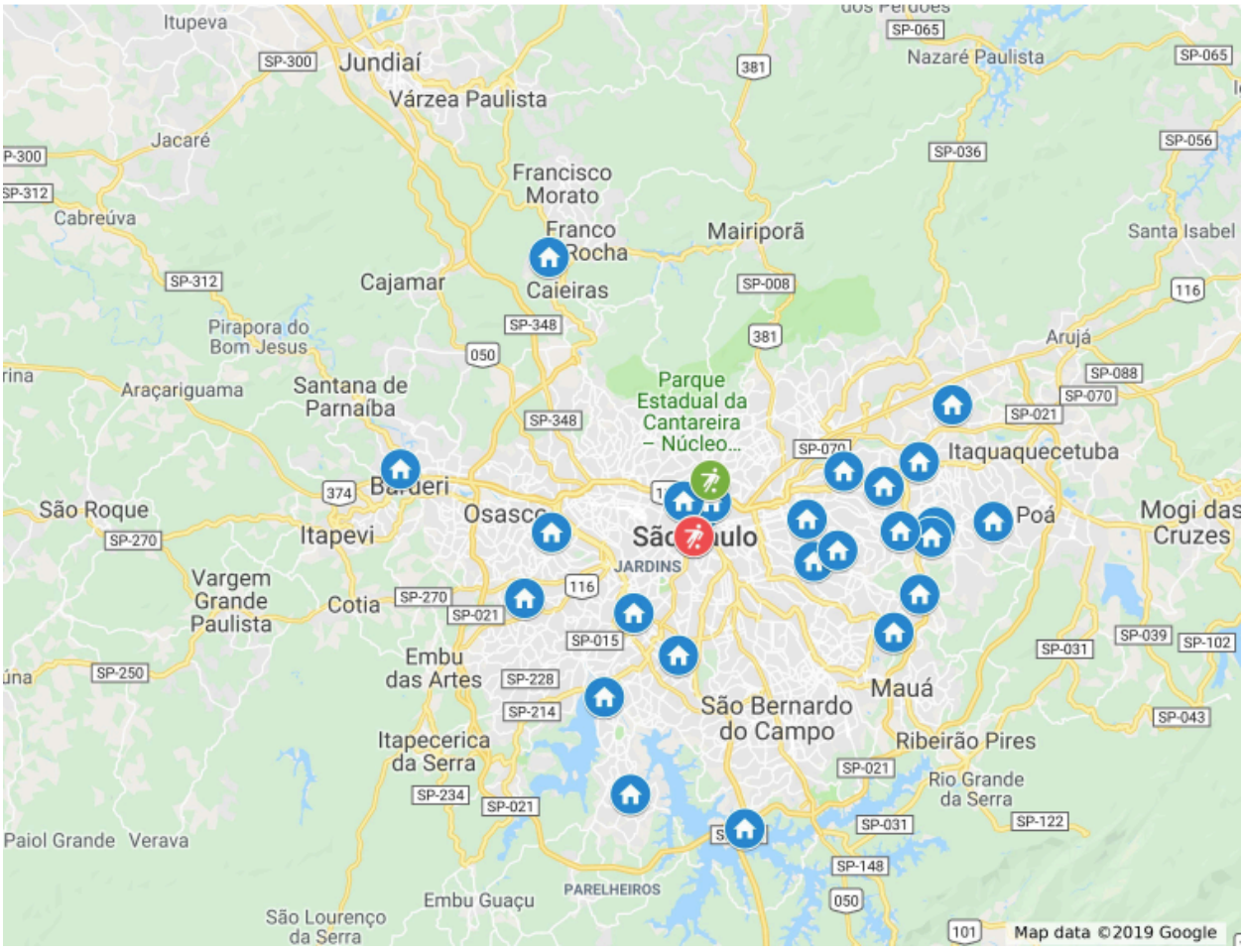

FIG 2.1 Google map of MBB's homes in São Paulo city.

Even in the first story from UOL, reporters stress their impoverished environment: it describes their first meeting "on a field without locks and with lines

erased" (2016).[39] The team was founded at a time of increased government-imposed austerity measures, such as cuts to unemployment insurance, survivor pensions and other policies (Schwarcz and Starling 2018, 595). In the coverage, economic struggles bleed easily into the physical trauma the *meninos* have endured. Media representations do not explicitly acknowledge the multiple structures of economic and racial oppression, and therefore do not account for the enormity of what the MBB are up against. In light of these challenges, it is clear that while a forming a soccer team is a fabulous self-made coping mechanism, it is not a long-term solution to confronting their core economic and racial challenges.

1.3. Erasure of Race

Media representations of MBB erase racial discrimination and inequality by never making mention of it. Because Rapha is the MBB's creator, he appears in all of the news coverage. To friends, Rapha identifies as black, fat, periferico (signifier of race and class), and trans. But media stories only focus on the trans part of his identity. His blackness (and to an extent, his class status) is never mentioned—neither by Rapha nor the reporters who cover the team.

Rapha does not often speak about race publicly. Through casual conversation over the two and a half years we've known each other, Rapha has hinted at reasons for why this could be. At one point, he became angry with a teammate who identified

[39] Incidentally, the team's founding took place during the imposition of increasing austerity measures.

Rapha as black in a grant application. He removed this language from the grant, and told me that he did so because he didn't want his race being used (particularly by his white teammate) as an affirmative action strategy to get money. Rapha made it clear to me that it is *his* decision when and where to speak about, or not, his racial identity.[40]

Months later, when they won the grant (from Fundação ELAS, started by Congresswoman Marielle Franco) this same teammate and Rapha were in charge of administering the grant money. Problems arose about how the money was being spent, and there are two sides to the story. According to Rapha, his teammate Thiago accused him of stealing money from the grant. This accusation cut deep - as Rapha was recounting the story in tears, he exclaimed that his whole life was set up for him to be a thief but that with great difficulty, he had refused that path. This accusation of stealing, he shared, pushed him into a point of such deep depression that he considered suicide. When I asked if he felt race was a play here, he responded "of course. I am black and Thiago is white. Would he have accused me if I were not black?" Besides being white, Thiago is perhaps the most class privileged of the group, which is unsurprising given how racial privilege generates class privilege in Brazil. He is the only member of the team with a university degree; apparently this is a fact he likes to remind team members of often. Thiago's side of the story is that he had merely asked Rapha if he was keeping receipts for his purchases. For anyone who has had to administer grants, like Thiago has, this is perhaps a common sense. Maybe

[40] Again, Rapha has given me full permission to write about him here.

it was not common sense for Rapha, Thiago figured, and so he asked if Rapha was doing this. Whether or not Rapha is keeping careful accounting and using the money according to grant guidelines is unclear. What the fight revealed, though, was a lack of understanding on both sides. Did Thiago navigate the situation with the delicacy it deserved, and with the understanding of his own positionality? What are all the components that make up Rapha's reaction? While Rapha and Thiago both navigate São Paulo as trans men, other aspects informing their intersectional identities, namely race and class, nuance what being a trans man in Brazil means.

The fight revealed a fissure along racial and class lines in the MBB that is rarely spoken about out loud. Initially, the white players sided with Thiago. Only after the team discussed the incident as a group, and Rapha shared that he felt personally attacked and racially profiled, did some of the members who originally sided with Thiago apologize to Rapha. For a few months, it looked as if the team might split. Then Thiago quit. In a message he sent to the MBB WhatsApp group, he told teammates he was quitting for mental and personal health reasons. He also shared he was leaving, without any grudges, due to irreconcilable differences between him and Rapha. I reenact this fight to give an idea about how politics, especially relating to race, on the team get (mis)handled. It is also one of the few occasions I have heard Rapha speak about race directly.

Rapha's decisions about which parts of his identity to highlight are a reminder of the strategies outlined by Chela Sandoval in her elaboration of histories and modes of resistance (2000). Sandoval elaborates varied forms of oppositional consciousness practiced by marginalized people; she identifies "differential consciousness" as one

strategy that involves shifting in adaptive ways between different oppositional tactics, like using the manual transmission of a car. The ways Rapha chooses which parts of his identity to highlight and when are an example of differential consciousness- for instance, he chooses when to speak about his racial, gender or class identities. Rapha's choices also reflect norms around discussing race in Brazil, where by and large race is *not* talked about.[41] What does one make of Rapha's strong reaction to Thiago's questions into the Fundação ELA grant's finances? One way to read Rapha's reaction is as a response to a buildup of microaggressions occurring across various realms: racial prejudice, unemployment, and lack of access to public goods. Rapha's reaction to Thiago may seem disproportionate until placed in context of the various aggressions he endures every day.

Even as Rapha is the face of the MBB and his story is most prominently featured in reporting on the team, journalists do not mention his race. The video where Rapha shared his story of getting stopped by the police at the stadium, for instance, is part of a film on being gender nonconforming in Brazil (Nakahara 2017). But there is no mention of Rapha's blackness in recounting this particular act of violence from the police. Given the history of police state violence against Afro-Brazilians, such an erasure is egregious and contributes to endemic racism (Seigel, 2018). As Gayle Salamon asserts in the context of racially-motivated murder, "the rendering invisible of the racial identity of the victim of violent hatred [is]…an 'act of

[41] Although this culture may be changing with the election of a vocally racist president, since his rise to power disproves beyond doubt a "racial democracy".

enforcing racelessness,' which…is itself a racial act" (Salamon 2018, 19). In Rapha's case, invisibilizing state violence against black and poor people like him is a racial act. While the myth of Brazil as racial democracy has widely been dispelled, the erasure of race in the media coverage of MBB is an important reminder of how race operates in Brazil. Brazil's management of black bodies "sits somewhere between the passive neglect of letting die and the intentional, political acts of state killing. Brazil's approach to the black body is to invisibilize it," according to Christen A. Smith (2016, 20).

1.4. Soccer as Savior

Rapha (and many of the *meninos*) speak about futebol as if it saved their lives in the sense that the MBB community brought (and continues to bring) him down from the ledge when he feels suicidal. Beyond the soccer field, the team provides a network of trans men to help one another out. But Rapha is also aware of how the MBB's story gets taken up in ways that hide the systemic issues that he and *meninos* confront.

As I arrived at my sense of how a "soccer as savior" narrative worked in coverage of the MBB, I reached out to Rapha to ask him what he thought of my observations. I told him that while I knew how much *futebol* means to him, I noticed the media seemed to present *futebol como salvador*, in the sense that the MBB is framed as the solution to the many systemic issues the *meninos* confront. He replied:

> Did futebol save me? It saved me! But … They need to tell a little of a sad story, to later
> show something happy. And with this they are able to reach X number of people. Sometimes I get a little worried about this because at the same time

> that they end up exposing our story, our experience, they want to show that we overcome everything easily. When in reality, it's not like that. It took a while for me to be ok; in soccer, to be good at home, it took a while for me to live, again. And, I think it's funny how much they (the media) prefer to show that, like, we don't suffer at all, you know? That something happens here, it's as if something happens, and the next day - all good— you know? When the truth is that it's not all good. Because we keep living, in struggle, we keep with firm determination, so we don't fall again. So, it makes me worried, I'm avoiding giving certain interviews, precisely because I'm seeing it in this way, you know? Like, they end up exposing us a lot and the uncertainty I have afterwards that I'll still be alive.
> (What's app 4/15/2019)

For Rapha, it is important to communicate the significance of futebol. The team he created *has* become a lifeline, for him and for many trans men. His critique, however, is of how reporters' coverage erases the team's ongoing struggles. In his own words, after surviving rape and suicide attempts, Rapha turned to futebol, and the team was something good to come from the assault. On the one hand this speaks to the power of the sport and to Rapha's strength as he fights to live. But might a framing of futebol as a silver lining also underline Rapha's lack of alternatives as he attempts to recover from the violence with little-to-no institutional support? Beneath the superficial story of soccer's magical powers lurks the grim reality: victims of assault rarely receive justice, and so if they are to heal, it will be of their own privatized volition and actions.

In a country where "order and progress" flies across the national flag, it is no surprise that the story of the MBB is told as a narrative of progress. Futebol, the quintessential Brazilian pastime, becomes an escape valve for the systemic violence the MBB confront. Within the *meninos*' origin story there are multiple violences at work: the sexualized violence of the male taxi driver's misogynist and transphobic rape; the violence of a police state, present in Rapha's earlier story of being stopped

at the stadium; one can also read the lack of funds for public parks and the people that use them as a form of structural violence. The MBB formed as a response to violence that is both immediate --in the case of the driver's assault and Rapha's subsequent suicide attempt—and deeply historical—in the case of state violence against Afro-Brazilians and the violence of neoliberalism and capitalism. There are also political shifts in Brazil and the rise of the right, which has made even the word "gender" contentious. Generalized transphobia and workplace discrimination is a form of violence they face as well (not just the physical violence Rapha faced). And while the media may individualize the aggressions against the *meninos*, such personalized forms of brutality occur in the context of less-noticed broader institutionalized violence (Federici, 2018).

Visibility and Public Access to Gender Affirming Technologies: Community Approaches

While there are clearly critiques to be made of the media coverage of MBB, the team's drive for visibility has had its desired effects. Their original goals—to become recognized, to be a magnet for other trans boys and men, to form a community—have been met. Almost every other month the MBB participate in "alternative" futebol tournaments hosted in and around the city of São Paulo, and they post regularly to Instagram and Facebook accounts (where they have 1,572 and 1,968 followers, respectively). The MBB are recognizable because of the large amount of media coverage they have received, but also because of their own vigorous participation in sporting events and their presence on social media. Having competed in both LGBT and alternative leagues for over two years now, the MBB are well

known in the São Paulo footballing community. In making themselves seen, they have raised consciousness around transmasculine identity.

Their visibility has also achieved another desired goal: to attract new members in order to become a growing support system for transmen. Whenever I attended practice, there was a new person visiting who had heard about the team through social or journalistic media. In July 2016, for instance, a man Angelo (pseudonym) showed up to train because he saw their story in the news and then found their social media page. He messaged the page (administered by Rapha) to find out where and when they practiced. Then Angelo came on Sunday at 9:00 am to the *Sindicato dos Bancarios* (the bankers' union) near the *Catedral da Sé* metro stop in the city center, where the MBB practice every week.[42] He didn't end up continuing to train with the team, but the players added him to the WhatsApp group and occasionally he participates in that.[43] The WhatsApp group, to date, has over 50 members, according to Pedro.

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[42] Sometimes, and often without warning, the sindicato does use the space on Sunday. This happened four times while I was conducting field work, and the team would have to relocate to a public park, often several train stops, a significant extra fare, away. Another time, the sindicato had a party the night before, and we spent the first hour of practice cleaning up trash and clearing away tables and chairs.

[43] WhatsApp is the primary means of communication in Brazil. It serves as a direct text and audio messaging system, as a message board, and as a LISTSERV.

Pedro told me that the WhatsApp group shares information on cultural events, jobs, and other goings on but it is mainly a trans-only place to talk about medical transition. A key component of the support the MBB provide for one another is information about navigating the medical system. Group members circulate information about buying hormones on the black market, the best places to get top surgery, and their experiences navigating the public system, since in Brazil, medical technologies for gender confirmation are paid for by the *Sistema Único de Saúde* (the SUS, or the public health care system).[44] The first publicly funded sex reassignment surgeries were carried out experimentally in 1997, in university and research hospitals with the permission of the Federal Council of Medicine. Then, in 2007, the Fourth Regional Federal Court argued in its ruling that "from the biomedical perspective, transsexuality can be described as a sexual identity disturbance where individuals need to change their sexual designation or face serious consequences in their lives, including intense suffering, mutilation and suicide" (Associated Press 2007). With

[44] In 2016 only four hospitals had been accredited. While many LGBT activist groups applauded the measure, others have criticized its underlying assumptions. First, the court decision and Health Ministry's guidelines for the surgery define transsexuality as a psychiatric illness, according to international biomedical standards, and subsequently require two years of psychotherapy for potential candidates to be approved for surgery. Second, power remains firmly in the hands of local medical authority, while stripping the patient of their right to choose (Jarrin 358, 2016).

this understanding that sex reassignment surgery is a basic health right, as of 2008, the Brazilian universal health-care system has covered the cost of sex reassignment surgeries in certain accredited hospitals throughout the country.

The ability to receive gender affirming care is a central part of the MBB's mission and visibility campaigns. As Galicia shared above, for many trans men, surgery and testosterone are critical components of social and physical survival. In terms of the MBB's impetus for visibility, the use of such technology is a fundamental issue because it ensures that they will be seen in a way that confirms how they see themselves. In other words, access to gender affirming care makes sure they will be visually read as men. I also describe the MBB's transitions to emphasize their community experience and emotional wellbeing through the medical process.

When I first met the team in 2017, only one player (Vovô) had gone through the SUS to obtain top surgery, after waiting on a list for 6 years. Some of the other players (I know of three) had opted for a private option for the double mastectomy and paid out of pocket. Most of the players also began hormone therapy on the black market, but now (at time of writing), almost all have entered into the public system to obtain hormone therapy and medical accompaniment, including those players that paid for their own top surgeries through private clinics. According to the 11/2018 MBB survey, twelve of the twenty-five players receives care from the public system, compared to four who use private practices (See Appendix 4). It is also notable that the four players who use private services are those who have relatively higher paid jobs that may offer them healthcare. Even so, a number of the meninos feel that the

public system is better than private practices, because it is better regulated and because state employees must undergo training to work with trans populations.

In August 2017, during a conversation with Rapha, Pedro, and Aira (a friend and former researcher from the soccer museum) at the Women's Worlds/Fazendo Gênero conference in Florianopolis, which we attended together, they explained their process of accessing hormone therapy as trans men. Rapha shared that he received his first testosterone injection at age 15 from a massage therapist at the club where he played soccer. Afterwards he became violently ill. At the time of the interview, he said, there are three kinds of medication available for transsexual men: Durateston (used every 15 days, 10 reais per box), Deposteron (used every 20 dias costing between 35–40 reais) and "the best of all," Nebido (a 4 ml injection that lasts 3 months and costs 450 reais per dose). Physical changes are gradual and vary by body. A deepening voice and body hair are some of the more visible changes. Pedro and Rapha shared their sense that hormone consumption remains an underexplored area for medical research. Besides there being a general lack of knowledge about the effects of hormone consumption, there is also much wrong information and outright fraud. They have been sick and know people who become sick from consulting with "specialists" in the private system who are neither trained nor certified.

In January 2019, I checked back in with Pedro about his medical transition and asked him to elaborate his experience in the SUS. April 2019 marked two years he has been receiving treatment via the public system. That means that every six months for the past two years, he has done a *bateria de exames* (a whole battery of medical checkup tests) at a *posto de saude* (a free local clinic that is part of the public

system network) near the center of São Paulo. Based on Pedro's exam results, he received approval from the endocrinologist to receive hormone therapy in the form of a shot (nebido) that he receives every three months. Every two months or so he meets with a psychologist whom he considers a friend and ally—"she even gives us her personal phone number and tells us to call at any time!" Pedro exclaimed. When I asked about how he felt about trans individuals having to undergo therapy to gain access to health care, he replied that "the doctors know we aren't sick but the bureaucracy makes them say it." In his experience, the public system is better than the private one because people are trained specifically to work with queer and trans populations.

The procedure also requires that he meets with a psychiatrist. But because the demand is so much higher than the psychiatrist's availability, despite Pedro's best efforts, he has never been able to schedule an appointment with her. After two years of publicly-funded hormone and psychotherapy, he should, in theory, move onto the list that qualifies him for surgery, although he is nervous that not having met with the psychiatrist may disqualify him or delay the process. Pedro also fears what the new administration under Bolsonaro, who is openly transphobic and homophobic, could mean for trans access to health care. Repeatedly, Pedro expresses that he knows the system is imperfect, but that he is grateful a public option exists, which he recognizes is not true everywhere.

The first step in the SUS-facilitated process is an intake with a psychologist at a *Posto de Saude* with an *ambulatorio TT* (which means this particular clinic specializes in trans health). At his intake, the psychologist asked Pedro to talk about

his identity, discomforts, childhood, hormonal treatment, and desired surgery. I told him about the article I had read by Jarrín (2016) that described how travestís were denied care when they did not want sex reassignment surgery, and I asked Pedro if there were parallels in his experience, since, to my knowledge, none of the MBB have pursued *faloplastia* or SRS. In other words, I asked if, to his knowledge, transmen also needed to express an interest in what doctors identify as sex reassignment surgery in order to receive publicly-funded treatment. Pedro responded that at the time (April 2017) he "had more discomfort with [him]self" and he told her he was interested in sex reassignment surgery.[45] But, he shared:

> Pedro: SUS never told me about options for a penis. In Brazil it's viewed as *experimental technology*. I know from my own research there are two options. Both of these are hard and painful recovery. They involve years of painful procedure. Because we don't view it as a possibility, we don't want it. But now, I don't know if I need that to validate myself.
> Cara: What changed?
> Pedro: A maturity. Not that there is anything wrong with people who do want that. But for me, I've evolved what it means to be a man.

Although Pedro started out wanting SRS, he does not want that now. His shifting desires are due, in part, to the fact that he does not view surgery as a viable option. But another motivating force behind Pedro's self-proclaimed evolution is his involvement in the MBB—a team of men like him who affirm one another's masculinity. The question of whether gendered options shape gendered desires resurfaces again and again in my discussions with the MBB. Here Pedro is speaking to the relationship between medical possibilities and selfhood. If sex reassignment *was* a conceivable option, would Pedro want it? In the absence of technology, and

[45] In the US some say "bottom" surgery vs. "top" surgery.

with his newly acquired maturity, Pedro's notions of manhood have changed so that they do not require a penis.[46] In asserting that his views have evolved more quickly than medical technology has, he is also questioning whether more "advanced" surgery is necessarily an evolution, as the medical industry might have us think.

The question of whether options shape specific desires for transition also has to do with one's peers and location. When describing sex reassignment procedures, Pedro switches from first person singular to the plural, from "I" to "we": "we don't view it as a possibility". His desires are shaped by the community of trans men of which he is a part, dissuading him of the necessity of sex reassignment. Pedro's desires, in turn, tell us something of the specificities of this community. If his MBB and transmen community discourages the necessity of sex reassignment surgery to affirm his manhood, it also motivates his desire for other interventions. For instance, Pedro shared in this same conversation that seeing other players after their top surgery has increased his desire for this operation.

The idea that certain men in Brazil identify as transexual and do not wish to undergo sex reassignment surgery is a topic worth exploring further, because rather than use a new identity (like travestí), they are using the western medical term "transsexual" but changing its meaning. The MBB's localized articulations of trans offer a critique of Western understandings of the category "transgender," which can essentialize identity in ways that do not reflect situated practices (Valentine 2007) and

[46] Pedro's views—that genitals do not define sex—have much in common with travestí subjectivities (Jarrín 2016).

can colonize and subsume noncoherent form of gender/sex variance (Dutta and Roy 2014). Using the term "transgender" uncritically may exert epistemological violence on the wide range of non-Western terms with which we equate it (Stryker and Currah 2014).

Desires to transition are also intimately tied to media visibility. In the case of the MBB, access to gender affirming technologies is an important aspect of the visual identity they want to project. Body hair, musculature, and a flat chest are increasingly important to *meninos* who want their outward appearance to align with their masculine identity, as well as with the physical appearance of their peers. But by asserting that their genitals do not define their gender, the MBB are challenging a progress narrative that transition necessarily requires SRS.

As a cis gender person, I share MBB's experiences with the SUS to situate the *meninos* within a Brazilian public health care context, to nuance my argument about systemic violence, and to describe the medical environment the MBB must navigate so that they can be seen in a way that reflects how they see themselves. It is because of the SUS that trans people are, in theory, are entitled to gender affirming care through a public system. Access to care is a major distinguishing factor of being trans in Brazil. Certainly, there are many caveats: travestís, for instance, face significant barriers to receiving the care to which they are entitled (Jarrín 2016). But, through my relationship with the MBB, I have seen that under a system that provides universal health care, poor people who are trans are better able to receive quality care. The systemic violence of *not* having a public option, which too many trans people around the world endure, is one relative privilege the *meninos* do have.

Making Transmasculinities Visible

It is through soccer that the MBB brought awareness to transmen's issues, mostly in São Paulo and the south of Brazil where they have competed and where soccer leagues have had more resources to flourish. Soccer displays the bodies of the players in particular ways. Whether or not soccer is an inherently masculine space is up for debate, but the MBB certainly believe that on the field, their masculinities are questioned, and that their bodies are under a microscope. This is particularly true because they usually play 7-7 soccer, rather than the 11-11 games played in the Olympics on a full-sized fields. A 7-7 field is smaller (60 x 40 yards) than a full sized one (100-130 x 50-100 yards) and, especially in urban environments, it is usually enclosed in metal caging (as in FIG. 2.2). On lookers sit or stand around the enclosure only feet away from the players. In an 11-11 game, on the other hand, spectators sit a further distance from the field.

FIG 2.2. Text reads "Be a part of Brazil's 1st trans team".
Photo Credit: Instagram, June 30, 2018 @meninosbonsdebolafc

Rapha's understanding of visibility includes transmen seeing and hearing one another, and it also implies an outward-facing visibility, made for the media. They realize that their stories and images are open to interpretation and not all interpretations will be kind or generous. Because of this, not all members of the team agree now with the mission of visibility. Initially, the glow of cameras gave them the feeling of being seen. But, when I visited two years after the first story was released, many of the *meninos* no longer wanted to give interviews with journalists. Some of the *meninos* even cast me in the same light with distrust.[47] As the flash fades, what is left for many of the athletes is a feeling that the story misrepresented who they are.

One of the main points of contention is that stories in the first and into the second year of media coverage framed them as people who are "born as women". Many players feel this is not an accurate representation of their gendered selves since they have always considered themselves men. Other players assert that they must recognize they were raised as women and had to navigate the world as such (whether or not they identified that way, other people treated them as women). One player, Tyaigo, shared with me that to disavow their former bodies is to erase their transness

[47] I remain close to Rapha and a few of the players, who have said explicitly that they trust me with their stories, but this view is not shared by all MBB players. When I am in São Paulo for fieldwork, it is clear that certain players view me with the mistrust they have for all outsiders. and therefore do not wish to speak with me. In either case, it is true that I represent an external gaze bringing their story to a new audience.

in an effort to be cis. It is an effort to distance themselves from femaleness, which he strongly disagrees with.

Another source of negative feelings around their representation is the negative feedback they have received. This is connected to how their former bodies produce a kind of haunting, as referenced in Tyaigo's comments above. Former selves are made visible on the soccer pitch; the public ridicule of these pre-transition bodies creates dissonance and discomfort among the MBB. For instance, the image below (FIG 3), used in *Portal O Día* and then reposted in *UOL Esporte*, generated much controversy. Both websites are widely visited and intended for general audiences. In the photo, we see Pedro taking a penalty shot, on Leo, in the goal, while Be and Tieley are blocking. Pietro (with the hat on and green shirt), appears to be coaching on the side. In the background, there are three masculine-presenting figures watching the game--two standing (one behind the metal bars) and one sitting adjusting his socks.

FIG. 2.3 Text reads "Transgenders unite to form a soccer team and 'family' in São Paulo"
Photo Credit: Portal O Dia, September 17, 2108.

This picture was brought to my attention by Gui Christ, who is a photojournalist and who reported on the MBB for Open Society Foundations.[48] We were at practice one Sunday together, and Gui mentioned an interesting photo where one player is covering their groin and another their chest. When I found the image as I was assembling the MBB archive and importing it into the NVivo software tool for analysis, I noticed the many disparaging remarks in the UOL comments section. Some readers jumped on Christ's same observation, posting comments that "dykes have had a name change", "this images proves they will never be real men", "bad women" and "look at the trans (feminine pronouns) protecting the dick they don't have".[49] Comments such as these are unfortunately part of the MBB's online experience, although they happen more on certain sites than others.

I asked Pedro to tell me about this picture, and he shared the following:

[48] Here is a link to access Christ's project: https://www.facebook.com/OpenSocietyFoundations/posts/brazil-has-the-highest-homophobic-and-transphobic-murder-rates-worldwide-in-2016/10155657901904921/

[49] I share these transphobic remarks not to reproduce this phobia but to expose it, to turn the gaze back on the lookers (Salamon).

Pedro: Well in this photo I remember a little about the commentaries from those guys that were watching us, negative comments. In that court, we didn't have much dialogue with other men, besides us, our time was up and we had to get off the court. I think they viewed us as fragile, maybe. Me: I remember Gui mentioned this photo because Tieley is protecting his genitals and Be is protecting his chest. I hadn't noticed. So I was trying to remember what I used to cover when I played and why. Pedro: Oh, yes, I thought of that, too. Me: I think I was trained to protect my chest. Pedro: I also always protected my chest, although it's a strange thing because after taking hormones the genital region is more sensitive, so that generates sort of an automatic reaction, in my case, right. But this is noticeable in the *meninos*, there is a difference in this part.	

Pedro's reflections about why and when he protected his chest and genitals hint at what media coverage might look like if the *meninos* were able to represent themselves. The protective gestures of his teammates did not call Pedro's attention the way they did Gui's, a cis gender male photographer. Through his eyes, Pedro understands that players at various stages of transition have different bodily needs and their gestures proceed "automatically" from these needs. Pedro's comments illustrate what the possibilities might be if transmen had more say in representing themselves.

At the same time that such gestures can be automatic, especially for reflex actions that protect the body from pain, there is also much about gesture that is learned. In my experience playing soccer, it was only in college, on an all-women's team, that I began to protect my chest during penalty kicks. Teammates informed me that this was because repeated trauma to the chest increased chances of breast cancer.

But prior to that learned "reflex", I had crossed my hands in front of my body below the waist, imitating the boys I played with. Interpretations of this image, then, reveal the extent to which the viewer has a phallocentric understanding of soccer rather than revealing any inherent truths about the way the game should be played.

Still, this image is from the *meninos'* first year of existence. In later images, the MBB were represented with greater respect and less ridicule or questioning of their subjectivities. The longer the MBB has existed, the more media coverage paints the players in gender coherent terms. This shift in the way media covers the MBB likely coincides with the rise of trans visibility, which has contributed to a public that is more knowledgeable about trans subjectivity. But I believe it is also related to the *meninos'* physical transitions over this period of time. When the team started, for instance, only one player had done top surgery. Two years later, at least five players have. According to the 11/2018 survey of the team, 19/25 players now uses testosterone, which was not the case when the team started (see Appendix 5).

Trans scholar Jamison Green presents this as a "visibility dilemma for transexual men" (2006, 499). The dilemma is that people who are out as transsexual, like the MBB, experience more 'gender policing'. But Green also notes that the more congruent transsexual men's' identities and bodies become through the process of transition, the less interesting they tend to become to the public, and the less illustrative their lives are of the diversity of gender experience—and therefore the more difficult it becomes for them to remain effectively 'out.' Green concludes that despite the ironies, transsexual visibility is crucial to expanding general awareness of the great range of difference contained within social norms of gendered embodiment

(2006, 499). Because the MBB formed in late 2016, it is too early to test Green's conclusion about the team becoming less interesting to the public. As a trans-identified soccer team, however, the MBB are and will remain necessarily visible *as* trans men.

What is clear is that as more and more players exhibit secondary sex characteristics that are typically associated with masculinity, the less the media refers to their former female-assigned bodies. [50] This article from a newspaper in Kenya, for instance, is titled "9 macho photos of the world's first transgender male's team based in Brazil" (Musili, 2019). The article describes the physical features of the players. It features me in one of its images (in this picture I am advertising the MBB uniform) (FIG 2.4); the contrast between the facial hair on Rapha's face and mine likely prop up Rapha's masculinity.

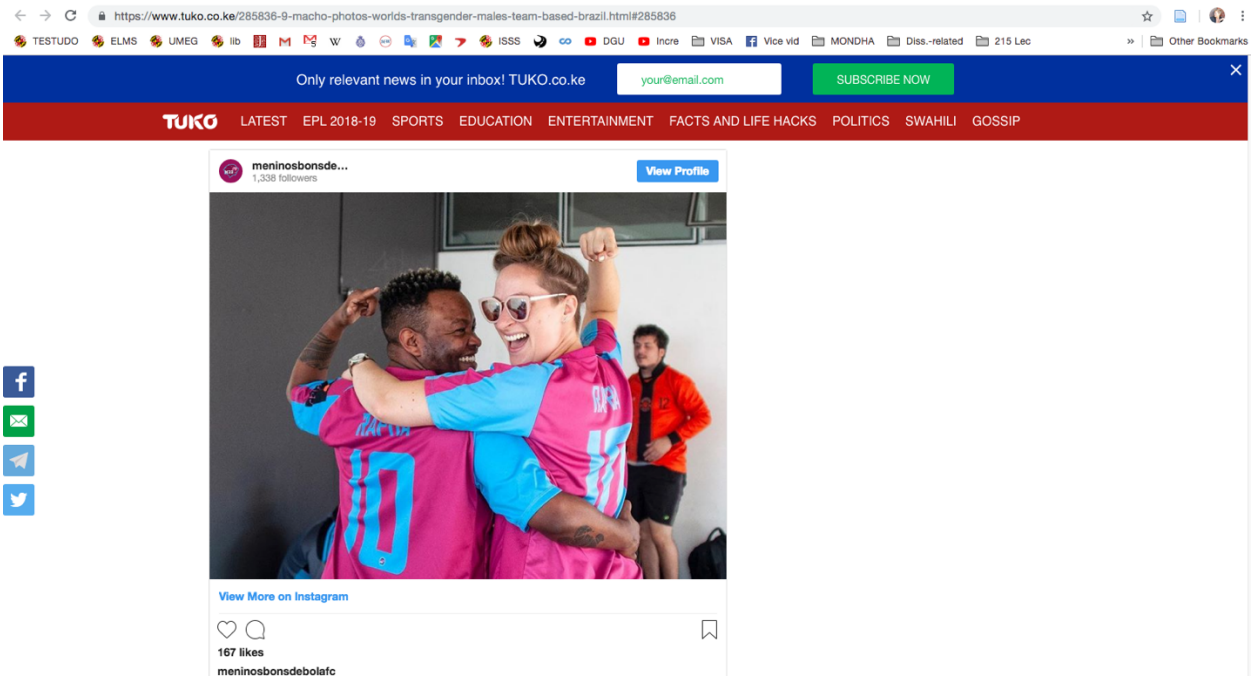

FIG. 2.4 MBB Uniform image posted on Tuko, (repost from Instagram, August 6, 2018 @meninosbonsdebolafc)

In this way, even as the MBB challenge the gender binary enforced in sports, they may also reinforce it as gender affirming technologies solidify their masculine appearance. The MBB reinforce the visual coherence of gender, but also challenge the violence and domination associated with masculinity. However, it is difficult to judge the collateral effects, such as whether reifying images of certain forms of masculinity in futebol contributes to the exclusion of queer women of color.

Queering and Transing Futebol

The *meninos* potentially queer soccer by playing as trans rather than within the F-M binary. Certainly, the foundation of their media fame is the fact that they are the first team comprised of exclusively trans men: every article about them ever written makes mention of this fact. Another potentially queer aspect of their team is

their focusing on visibility and community rather than winning, seen in the MBB anthem:

O importante não é ganhar, mas sempre competir	*Winning isn't important, but competing is*
Na vitória ou na derrota, conquistando novos fãs	*Whether we win or lose, we earn new fans*
Meninos bons de bola, somos todos homens trans	*Soccer star boys, we are all trans men*

-Excerpt from the Meninos Bons de Bola anthem. Lyrics by Raphael Henrique Martins and DJ MC Troi.

Similar to J. Halberstam's *Queer Art of Failure* (2011), which seeks alternatives to conventional understandings of success, the MBB's goal is counter to a heteronormative, capitalist, white supremacist version of sports that operates in binary logic: women-men, winner-loser. To "queer" soccer, then, refers to challenging multiple binaries, both gender binaries and the competitive binaries that come with them. The F-M binary creates a hierarchy, particularly in terms of the gendered assumptions that overlay what being male or female means in the world of soccer. Men's soccer is understood as masculine—as hard(er), strong(er), fast(er)—than women's soccer. The men's game in this sense is coded as superior. Beyond playing as a "third" category, trans, does "queering" necessarily mean playing differently and/or disputing this hierarchy? And does this mean that we accept women and "non-cis men" play soft(er), weak(er), slow(er)? Indeed, this is another reason why sport is a fascinating lens into gender and sexuality, because the angle—the stark and rigid lines (more so than art, for instance, which is more open to interpretation)—forces a direct confrontation with gendered preconceptions. If there is something "queer" about the art of failing, is there also something queer about losing? What are the

differences between failing and losing? Furthermore, can you play differently and still win?

Although the MBB queer soccer by playing as trans and challenging the goal of winning, it is not easy to do this. There are many examples of the resistance they encounter—including transphobia in LGBT leagues, disputes within LGBT circles over who is more oppressed and therefore deserves greater access to resources (colloquially called oppression Olympics), and whether the MBB will be put forward to represent LGBT athletes (in competitions like the Gay Games) if they do not win—which shows disciplining pressures, even within LGBT and "alternative" sports leagues. Similar to the issues with mainstreaming women's soccer, the further along the MBB get, the more they must change their mission and win games if they are to attract sponsors. Whether or not they can "win" raises endless debates and points of struggle within the team. Whom do they play against: Cis-gay men? Women, broadly defined? Queer women? To be the *only* trans team in a system set up in binary terms—not just F-M but also two sides competing—is to literally be in a league of your own.[51] Besides whom they should play against, how should they play? Aggressively? Like cis men? Can they change the game, or must they adapt to it? Their very presence throws up fascinating questions about the way gender structures sports.

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[51] Although in 2018, another transmen team in Recife has formed--https://globoplay.globo.com/v/7131862/-- and in 2019, the MBB informed me they have been in contact with a trans men's team from Rio to organize a competition.

The questions circulating in current academic conversations about the relationship between transmen and cis gay men and about the about the Butch/FTM border wars are especially relevant to the MBB. This team primarily play against cisgender gay men, and occasionally against queer women (of which there are less teams), now that they participate in LGBT+ leagues. They also participate in "alternative" competitions, as one I will describe below. Issues related to what it means to be and play as trans in this context came up during a focus group session I held with the team on Sunday, July 15, 2018. Our focus group session highlights how the team is grappling with the gendered dilemmas futebol presents. In this and other conversations with members of the MBB, it became evident they are grappling with several issues related to gendering: the relationship between trans men, gay men, and queer women; transness and gender norms; transness as a projection of gendered insecurities; and flaws in trans allyship. Through the MBB's *roda de conversa* (conversation circle), we see how futebol lays bare fundamental discussions about gender and oppression.

Eight self-selecting players joined the *roda*. I centered the group conversation around a series of questions that asked players to reflect on differences and similarities between trans and cis gay masculinities, as well as trans and female masculinities, in general and in futebol:

1. *Quais são as diferenças e as semelhanças entre homem trans e homem cis-gay?*
   (What are the differences and similarities between trans men and cis gay men?)
    a. *De modo geral e no futebol (*in general and in football)?
2. *Quais são as diferenças e as semelhanças entre mulher masculinizada e homem trans?*

(What are the differences and similarities between masculinized women and transmen)?

   a. *De modo geral e no futebol* (in general and in football)?

3. *Agora, com essa pergunta eu estou averiguando sobre as relações entre gênero e sexualidade, e quando eu digo sexualidade eu estou referindo ao desejo, quem você deseja: Como a sua sexualidade entra em jogo no futebol? Sua sexualidade influencia como você respondeu às perguntas anteriores?* (Now, with this question I am asking about the relationships between gender and sexuality, and when I say sexuality I am referring to desire, who you desire: How does your sexuality come into play in football? Does your sexuality influence the way you respond to the previous questions?)

My questions sparked fierce debate amongst the *meninos*. Some players believed there is no difference between trans and cis gay men or that the differences—like that trans men "are more reserved and don't expose themselves as much"—are insignificant. One player, M1[52], recognized differences in cis and trans masculinities but did not feel these were a disadvantage in futebol: "it's the same when Brazil plays against Belgium... they are always bigger than us, and so we have to adapt."

The players agreed that there are size differences among genders: cis men are, on average, taller and heavier than trans men. But so, too, are European players compared to Brazilian ones. These divergences cannot be ignored in the context of a sport where size potentially matters. And yet, as in the case of Brazil versus Belgium, these size differences are not necessarily hierarchical or determinate. Many *meninos* felt that differences between trans and cis men need not imply cis male superiority. They suggested that gaps might be bridged with additional training.

[52] I use M1 – 8 (M for *Menino)* to distinguish between voices in the *roda* while maintaining anonymity.

Once the *meninos* seemed to reach a consensus that there are differences between cis and trans masculinities in relation to how they play futebol, there was debate over how to navigate these distinctions. Some thought the MBB should adjust their playing style to become more violent, more aggressive, according to the sports' hegemonic masculinist norms:

> M5: We have some guys who are lighter (names four). So if you go with a weak body (*corpo mole*) the guys are going to come at you with a physical play and you're going to fall. So if you learn how to stay firm, you can take down the guy. Because he'll come with everything, thinking he's going to take you down, and you'll do the opposite. You'll just stand firm and he'll fall. And that right there is a normal play. For this we need to, like, put our minds to this. That we need to adapt. **We need to adapt to them and not them to us**.
> M8: I agree with this. Futebol is like this since the beginning of time. The world of futebol is like this in any competition, in any place…: it's conditioning, it's strong bodies, it's passing (the ball)—that's necessary…
> M7: When we're here playing against ourselves we think it's easy to take someone on. Then we play against the guys and we get a reality check.
> M8: When we play against other teams, we are afraid of contact.
> M2: It's true, I'm not always sure how to deal with size.
> M3: But it's not just about the body, it's the psychological, too…

According to M8, M7 and M5 there is an irrefutable masculinist standard in futebol that is based on strength, speed and confrontation. If futebol is this, they asserted, we must adapt to it. But they did not necessarily advocate to match the violence of the game. M5, for instance, advised his teammates to play defensively rather than retributively. M8 encouraged more passing and teamwork. Matches against cis men have clearly changed the MBB, forcing them to "adapt" and adjust their understandings of physicality according to their opponents. And yet, even in this binary setup (two teams, one winner), there are elements of futebol masculino that they continue to resist, such as the idea that bigger or more physical players are

necessarily better. Adapting does not discount the MBB's commitment to playing differently, or queering the game.

Many raised points about the transphobic and misogynist slurs they encounter every time they play against cis gay men, which is part of the psychological element M3 refers to above. For instance, our focus group happened just weeks after a tournament in which cis gay men from an opposing team made transphobic comments to the MBB. During the championship, staged in São Paulo by the gay hookup app *Hornet*, some players had remarked "if we can't win against these *mulherzinhas* (little women, referring to the MBB), we might as well drop out of the tournament". But some *meninos*, mostly players who identify as gay, reminded the team that the MBB suffer transphobic aggressions from people of many different identities, and that the comments of few should not be used to discredit the whole.

Queer women have also made transphobic remarks to the MBB. When I asked about the difference between trans men and masculine women, the team reacted negatively:

> M3: In futebol we have contact with some girls that play here, who have women's teams, I think the majority are lesbians. Our contact is normal but it happens that a lot of people, especially lesbian women, they have a lot of difficulty relating to trans men. They still have that thing where they're not able to disentangle a trans man from a woman, because sometimes he has a chest, and the organ. This happens often. And our contact, like our contact visually, is already disorienting for them. Many times, girls come and train here and without fail someone will call us "she" or "her".

The *meninos'* negative reaction to my question comparing them to butch women is not surprising; other players had a similar response when I first met the team in 2017, after I introduced myself as a graduate student in *estudos feministas*, or feminist studies. Several players at that initial practice questioned me about my

feminist politics in relation to trans men. They shared stories of negative experiences they had coming out as trans within their lesbian circles, making it clear that trans-exclusionary women were not welcome in the MBB's space. I made clear my rejection of so-called trans-exclusionary feminism. While the majority of the MBB are in relationships with cis women, they remain wary of transphobia in certain lesbian communities.

The knee-jerk "no" to my question may also stem from the *meninos'* desire to distance themselves from being identified as lesbians. On Facebook, for instance, I have seen three separate posts on individual players' pages that declared publicly and angrily: they are not lesbians, they are trans men (FIG 2.5).[53]

[53] The full text of this post reads: "A trans man is not a masculinized lesbian, he is a MAN. I know there is a lack of understanding in lesbian circles about him [trans men], but just as you all fight for a cause, he [trans men] fight for his. There is a need for respect. They [trans men] did not become men, they were always men trapped in bodies that were not theirs and YES I will talk about this subject as often as is necessary. They [trans men] might be hetero, gay, bisexual or pansexual (pansexual are with people independent of gender or sexuality). I want that when you see photos and the name is a MASCULINE one, that you use the right pronoun."

FIG. 2.5 "A trans man is not a masculinized lesbian, he is a MAN." Facebook, 2018.

These were clearly retorts to public commentary conflating trans and lesbian masculinities. M3, however, offered another angle:

> M3: It's always good to have a mediation before teams meet, so these misunderstandings don't happen. We should also take responsibility to inform people who are not informed.
> M1: I lost a lot of people. A lot of old friends from lesbian circles who refuse to use my chosen name. I'm like 'I respect you as a lesbian, I want you to respect me as a trans man'. And with that basis we can be friends. In futebol, too, there are girls who are starting to get it, who interact with us, and we're able to explain. Many respect us. But some don't…I think the difference is this, they don't want to accept that we are trans men. For many of them, they are playing against women. But many treat us as hetero. It's the same when we're playing against gay men. Many don't respect us, but many accept and respect us.
> M4: yeah, remember that one gay men's team we competed against, that was a great game.

Here, M3 expressed the educational role he hopes the MBB fill. Rather than assume transphobia, he understands people might simply be ignorant and in need of information. He suggested that the MBB take an active role in educating other teams about trans subjectivities. Demonstrating the critical consciousness raising that can

happen alongside the more simplistic forms of group think that is also part of any team, M1 seems to have heard his teammates' argument, and nuanced his own: yes, players may hear misogynist slurs when they play against cis men or transphobic comments from cis lesbian women. But, there are many gay and lesbian futebolistas who respect the MBB as trans men.

Still, transphobia in the form of mockery is a powerful disciplinary force in the lives of the MBB. The idea of not "exposing" oneself came up multiple times throughout the conversation, as when the discussion turned to whether players "out" themselves as trans or not:

> M1: Once, I went somewhere with a friend and they introduced me as a trans man. I felt super uncomfortable. Why? Because I don't like to expose myself. That's why I mostly stay at home. And in futebol, I play, most people accept you, but someone or another is going to find you strange. And that's tolerable, but then there's a joke here, a joke there, and that makes me not want to expose myself.
> M4: That's why I stopped saying it [that I'm trans].
> M2: I'm never who I am when I'm around cis men. I always have to make myself more macho. Like when I'm hanging out with my brother and his friends; they have their conversations, and I never fit. I find I have to make myself more masculine. And this is really annoying (*chato*) because I have to be more masculine to earn people's respect. At home I'm not that way, I'm fun, I'm happy, I'm more effeminate. But around cis guys, no, around them I have to embody masculinity for them to respect me. Otherwise they think that we have an intimacy and that they can joke around with me, but I don't tolerate those things. Even though I'm a jokester. Here, I can just be myself. Everyone knows who I am, I'm a *bichona* (super effeminate gay man). But in the middle of cis men no. If there were cis men here, I'd be armed (*tudo armado*). For me, that's how I see cis men, which is *chato*.
> M4: Not me, if they were here we'd be playing, hitting each other.

These *meninos* spoke to the role that ridicule plays in their lives, although such ridicule has dissimilar effects. M1 reiterated the discomfort negative attention brings; so much so that he prefers to stay at home than face mockery. M2 feels the need to selectively perform masculinity and hide the happy sides of himself around cis men,

while M4 prefers to pass as cis (which is more possible for him, given his physical appearance, than his two teammates) and play aggressively.

In life, as on the field, some *meninos* think the MBB should adjust their playing style to be more violent, more aggressive, according to the sports' hegemonic, masculinist norms, while others objected, 'isn't our goal to change the way soccer is played? To be different kinds of men?' The MBB are not in agreement whether both—adjusting and changing—are possible. Debates about what it means to be a man in the world bled easily into discussions about what it means to be a futebolista. This is because futebol was defined along masculine lines. The MBB are navigating and challenging both lines, simultaneously. It is also part of what is exhilarating about the MBB: to redefine futebol is to redefine gender. The MBBs transing of soccer, then, is also queer.

As the *roda* shows, however, these goals are not as straightforward as they appear in MBB theme songs and mottos that profess "winning isn't the goal". There are discrepancies between the team's utopic vision and the lived reality of competition. The MBB's tagline "*nossos corpos na cuadra é resistência, arte e ativismo*", ("Our bodies on the pitch are resistance, art and activism"), printed on team paraphernalia, communicates that the MBB's mission is resistance and not necessarily winning. But it becomes difficult to enact and embody such a philosophy in the context of competitive sport where winning means dominating over another team. Transphobia, especially in the form of mockery and misgendering, are powerful disciplining forces at work against the MBB's queer ideals. To not win is to possibly face ridicule. To play, then, is to take a risk that leaves players exposed to transphobic

taunting, which is deeply painful for many *meninos*. In futebol, where one team wins and another loses, the MBB disagree about how to play and whom to play against. Tensions around adapting to cis masculine norms question the extent to which queering is possible. Even the MBB's (repeated) use of the term "adapt" during our *roda* signals how seeking acceptance through futebol is an assimilative move; the MBB make sacrifices on the way to integration.

The Queer Art of Losing?

The focus group conversation we held on July 15, 2018 was in preparation for what I would witness on Saturday, July 21, 2018, when I saw the MBB compete in the championship advertised in the flier below (FIG 5). This tournament was the *primeiro torneio marighella de futsal da unidade popular,* the first marighella tournament of *futsal* to unite the people / for popular unity. There were 20 teams confirmed. As you can see in the flier names and logos, most are politically oriented—they are worker unions, communists, socialists, anarchists, libertarians, and refugees— but some, like a gothic-themed team, are more playful. All but 4 teams (MBB, gothics, a student team, and Rosa Negra) are comprised exclusively of cis men players. This was my first time seeing the MBB compete, and it brought to life many of the themes from our *roda* about how the team adapts to competition against cis men.

FIG 5: Flier from a tournament the MBB played in on Saturday, July 21, 2018 called the "1st Marighella futsal tournament of popular unity"

Prior to this competition, I had only seen the MBB play amongst themselves, and was impressed by their skills. In terms of the MBB's athletic resumés, there are at least three *meninos* who have played professionally, and many others have trained since childhood. A few of the players had little experience with futebol prior to joining the MBB. Some, like Vô, have talked about how, as children, parents blocked their access to soccer; parents who noted masculine tendencies in their "little girls" made sure they were as far away from sport as possible. Others, like Leo, felt that soccer was not meant for "men like him" (his words), and so he avoided it altogether until he heard about the team where all the players were men like him. The team's players have a range of athletic ability, but overall, the MBB are competent players. Moreover, the team competes in *futsal*, which is played indoors in a slightly smaller

field and is therefore potentially more capacious for different skill sets beyond normative, masculinist ones of strength and speed, which are standards used to judge 11-11 games.

However, various disadvantages and the ghosts of former bodies become evident when the MBB compete against other teams. For the players who have little experience with futebol, or for the players who were socialized as girls, there are many psychological and physical barriers they must overcome every time they step onto the field.[54] Most cis men in Brazil who grow up playing and watching soccer relatively free of shame or guilt have the advantage of additional years of "training" and skill building. Masculinist sport standards dictate that strength and speed are the most important characteristics for many types of sports, rather than say, agility. Conventionally athletic bodies, socialized in certain ways, are those that can perform according to these standards. The vast majority of the MBB does not have bodies that conform to this type and they were not socialized as cis men. In Brazil, as in many other parts of the world, access to quality food and the ability to exercise is made possible by income and leisure time. MBB, as an amateur team, practice just once a week.

Still, the MBB normally train in an enclosed area, with a guard to open the door. In this protected space, which is the only place I'd seen the MBB play before

[54] For a thorough explanation of how people who are raised as girls are socialized to move in ways that inhibit them from achieving their athletic potential, see Iris Marion Young's "Throwing Like a Girl" (2005).

this particular tournament, they demonstrated skill and competence.[55] They comfortably took off their shirts, yelled, fought and made up, and played hard. Over the multiple times I had seen them train, I observed them as confident futebolistas. The team I saw compete on Saturday, July 21, 2018, however, was not the same team I have seen train. It was as if I were witnessing completely different people and players. My field notes from the competition that day bring to life many of the themes from our *roda*, as I observed the MBB's gendered anxieties play out on the field:

Bernardo, Vovô, Pedro, Rapha, Isa, Mercia and I meet at the train station to go together to the games. Be and Vô seem irritated, probably because we are running a little late. Dri is waiting for us there when we arrive, making 6 players, just enough to compete. The MBB look fabulous in their new uniforms, but their attitude does not reflect their look. I have never seen the players so anxious. Compared to the other teams, who are talking, laughing, playing passing and juggling games (lifting the ball into the air and passing it between players without the ball touching the ground) with one another, the MBB are silently huddled in a corner. There is little chatter and they are having trouble making eye contact. They don't warm up. They don't have a chant. They seem scattered, unorganized. Once they enter the metal gates, they are up against an all cis-male team in bright orange uniforms. In relation to their competitors, the MBB look short and out of shape. They enter the ring already defeated. When the other team scores a point within the first minute, it just seems to confirm what they have already decided for themselves.
Pedro is defending well, and then Isa (the team photographer) catches Bernardo saying something haughty to him like "oh so you want to be in the goal?", so Pedro moves away from the defense into the front, and then the other team just starts scoring like crazy. Everyone keeps yelling at Pedro (I'm not sure why he is the target of everyone's anger…). MBB are not playing with even half the skill I have seen them exhibit during training. They are slow, timid, unaggressive, they don't talk to each other or run towards the ball. They are playing totalmente sem vontade, without will. Two, 10-minute halves pass and they have lost 7 to 0. When they leave the field they are arguing. The passions cool, and the second game approaches. I find the team they are playing against-- older men who work for the city's hydroelectrics. I talk to one of the members, who shares that he also plays for the Azul Proletario, and that he knows the MBB and feels their mission is important. Overall the other teams know and seem

[55] Comparing them, for instance, to the Division 3 women's soccer team I played on in College, they would likely have beaten us.

to be supportive of MBB, except for a few younger players watching from the sideline, who are talking shit about how badly the MBB are losing, but they are outliers here.

Against the Azul Proletario, the MBB lose 13-0. They seem so disheartened by these losses that I wonder if it is good for morale for the team to compete in tournaments. Isa shares the same thought with me: as we are on the sidelines taking pictures, she shares that she doesn't think they are ready to compete. In her opinion, they should get a coach, and enter when they are better prepared. The losing gets to them.

The hurtful reality of defeat presents a conundrum for this team whose goal is not winning. It suggests a difference between losing and failing, as theorized by queer pessimists. Queer pessimists like J. Halberstam, José Muñoz, Edelman, and Sarah Ahmed contest the normalizing imperative for positivity (happiness, optimism, progress). Failure, according to this logic, need not be "bad", or bad need not be judged as less than. Particularly relevant to the MBB's approach, in *The Queer Art of Failure*, J. Halberstam draws on photographer Tracy Mofatt's "Fourth Place" series to read losing "queerly" (2011, 93). In the series, Moffat photographs Olympians at the 2000 Sydney games who came in fourth place, right at the moment of defeat. For US Americans, who are accustomed only to witnessing victory— thanks to broadcasting that focuses primarily on the country's "gold" events like swimming, running, and gymnastics— to come in anything less than first place, but especially to fall outside the top three, is shameful. Yet, according to Halberstam, this single story of constant victory misses the drama, unpredictability, and mess of not winning, which Mofatt's art manages to capture. Moffat's series represents the queer art of failure because it "is a document of desperate disappointment, dramatic defeat, and the cruelty of competition. These images remind us that winning is a multivalent event: in order for someone to win, someone else must fail to win, and so this act of losing has its own logic, its own complexity, its own aesthetic, but ultimately, also, its

own beauty" (Halberstam, 2011, 93). To lose is beautiful, Halberstam implies, because it is textured but also because it is alternative to winning, which can be cruel to the extent it is zero-sum, winner takes all.

Halberstam's take on the moments of failure captured in Mofatt's photographs both does and does not apply to the MBB. Similar to the art of failure Halberstam is advocating, the MBB do not view coming in first place as the objective for playing, although such an approach is certainly more common in amateur athletics. But even in professional soccer, Brazil's (perhaps recent) approach to international competition seems to rewrite what it means to lose, and in so doing the case questions the Eurocentrism of queer pessimist thought. There is something very queer about Brazil's colossal failure in the most recent showing by the men's team in the World Cup, which is permanently lodged in the brain of any Brazilian old enough to remember 2014, and about the Brazilian response that international games like the World Cup and the Olympics "matter less than local tournaments" (Stein and Campisi 2016). Rather than dwell in the 7-1 loss against Germany on their home turf, for now (although this may change as the next international competition approaches) many Brazilians have turned this loss into an opportunity to turn inwards, and to celebrate the spirit of their domestic rivalries. A refusal to play in the international game, already rigged in favor of rich and powerful nations, is queer indeed.

But in other ways, reading beauty in failure seems disingenuous, at best. One may learn to accept failure, but few aspire to it. To an extent, viewing failure as an art seems a privileged standpoint. Like many marginalized athletes, including cis women, cis gay men, trans folks and non-white athletes, when the MBB step on the

field, they play with the heavy burden of representation. Any failure can and likely will be ascribed to their gender, sexuality or race: a burden most hetero cis male white athletes do not feel. There are also differences in what the MBB experience, because it is happening in the moment and is not an artistic rendering. When I have seen the MBB lose, they appear to experience it as a punch in the gut. There is nothing beautiful about it. The jeers and taunts from hostile onlookers every time the MBB's opponents dominate them— by dribbling around them, by stealing the ball from them, by scoring a goal against them—are painful, both to witness and to experience.

An hour after we left the tournament, on the train back to the city center, I asked the team "what happened? And what are the possible ways to reframe these games"? One player felt the other teams should have stopped scoring after they were five goals ahead of the MBB. Teams other than the MBB should also play ethically and with care, he expressed. Another *menino* noted that if the MBB had more players present they would have been able to substitute and therefore be less exhausted. Rapha, the team captain, chalked it up to a learning experience and urged the team to let it motivate them to train more. One other player signaled agreement with Rapha, and said he was more upset about the lack of teamwork and comradery than about losing. "I was all alone in the world before the MBB," he shared, "maybe we're so used to being alone that we have to learn to come together on the field".

The process of world building, like the process of losing, is a painful one. The MBB are learning to do both, as they navigate a world and a futebol that is made to exclude them. Losses sting, but they do not overshadow the MBB's many successes, the most important of which is the community they have created and the visibility

they have earned. Judging from my conversations with other teams at the tournament, who shared with me the deep respect they have for the *meninos*, the message in the MBB anthem rings true: "whether we win or lose, we earn new fans. *Meninos Bons de Bola*, we are all trans men."

Conclusion: Queer Worldmaking and the Trans Everyday

Based on a sustained ethnographic engagement with the *Meninos Bons de Bola* soccer team, this chapter offers a perspective of the trans everyday. Visibility plays an ambivalent role on the men's team. Media communication strategies become an important means of cultural survival in the face of pervasive anti-trans violence in Brazil—trading information but also comradery. Acting as a homing device, visibility has allowed the MBB to maintain social practices across large swaths of the urban terrain. Media also becomes a site of potential surveillance and spectacle—prompting the *meninos* to have distinct practices of journalistic and ethnographic refusal. In the examples of viewers' comments on the internet as well as those made during soccer tournaments (even "alternative" and LGBT+ ones), visibility is an opening to mockery.

As the MBB fight for visibility and belonging by way of Brazil's national sport, they are marking futebol as a key site for creating transness. Making trans gender through futebol also means the MBB are transforming the sport by pushing its boundaries and binaries. Indeed, as their tagline asserts, the mere presence of their bodies on the field is activist. But it also means the MBB are transformed *by* futebol and its coercion. Transmasculinities in this context are forced to grapple with

hegemonic, cis masculinities. My focus group with the *meninos* illustrates the dilemmas they encounter as they construct trans subjectivities while confronting the limits and possibilities of queering futebol.

In moments like the *roda de conversa* and my conversations with Pedro, "Trans(form)ing Futebol" asks readers to consider: what does it mean to construct a trans world outside of institutionalizing vectors of medicine, policy, media, and activism? More than a dialogue about identities, the *roda* also articulates, in their own voices, the ways trans people in Brazil theorize oppression, survive transphobia, and thrive in spite of these. Occasions like the *roda* showcase the *meninos'* diverse perspectives, which reflect the range of experiences and identities that gather under the umbrella of "trans." In addition to Pedro's calling attention to phallocentric embodiment, the expression of his subjectivity in the language of 'we' is also striking; it may suggest new collective ways that gender autonomy can be created. In these ways, the *Meninos Bons de Bola* provide insight into the worldmaking that happens in subversive settings such as this Brazilian trans men's soccer team.

Chapter Three: Fielding Futebol
or 'What's Gay About the Way You Play?'

August 11, 2018.

It is the men's soccer 7s final at the 10th Gay Games, played between Sud Au Cul from Paris, France and the BeesCats from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The score is 2-2 and tensions are running high. Sud Au Cul has a home team advantage against the BeesCats. The only woman on the field is the referee, a butch lesbian from anglophone Canada, who draws a red card on a player from the Parisian team. This means the French side has to play one athlete down, with 6 players instead of 7, for the remainder of the match. The carded player storms over to the referee and begins yelling obscenities at the official, his face inches from hers. Non-French-speaking players and fans cannot understand much of what he is saying, with exception to the words "fucking bitch" which he makes sure to yell in English. Players from the BeesCats who are on the sidelines react immediately by forming a protective barrier between the screaming man and the referee. After a minute, the incensed player backs off and game continues.

This exchange, which I witnessed in Paris at the Parc Interdépartemental des Sports Paris du Tremblay in Champigny-Sur-Marne, dramatizes many elements in the larger story of LGBT + football. It illustrates the tensions at the heart of one central question in this dissertation: whether and how LGBT futebolistas queer soccer. In this

case, the tensions come into relief in the context of an international competition. The violence of one player and the peaceful solidarity of the others speaks to the worst and best of my experiences at the Gay Games. On the one hand, misogyny (as well as femmephobia), violence (as well as violent competition), and white European supremacist behavior were on display in this moment of the Games. One player's domineering behavior makes clear that LGBT+ athletics are not free of the elements found in, or even characteristic of, mainstream masculinist soccer: violence, cut-throat competition, and Euro-white male supremacy. We can also read the absences in this story as typical of other problems with the Games: women, trans and non-binary folks, people with disabilities, and athletes from the Global South were largely absent in competition and leadership positions because of the prohibitive costs.[56]

At the same time, there are parts of this story that also present queer/non-normative possibilities. First, the head referee of the final game was someone who identifies as a woman, and this is uncommon in mainstream cis men's sports. The BeesCats behavior, which shows respect for, caring of, and solidarity with the ref (who the team affectionately called "Mama", see FIG 3.2, 19), exemplifies these gay men's allyship with LBT members of their community. Furthermore, the BeesCats

[56] During my research with LGBT teams in Brazil I spoke with two groups, whose members face multiple oppressions, that were unable to raise the sufficient funds to make it to the Games: the *Meninos Bons de Bola* from São Paulo, Brazil's first trans men's soccer team, and the *Estrellas* from Rio who identify as LBT+ women and who have also have several deaf players.

refused to engage in displays of violence and domination. The Brazilian side's refusal of certain norms is one example of a practice of queering soccer. "Fielding Futebol" will expand on the concept of queering soccer; it will continue to explore the possibilities as well as the limits that women and LGBT+ athletes encounter as they attempt to change, or as they uphold, certain conventional standards in football.

The history of an exclusively cis gay men's soccer league in Brazil is recent: a small group of athletes formed local teams in 2015 and these groups founded a league, the LiGay, in 2017. The BeesCats (joined by players from other teams), one of the LiGay's founding teams, played internationally for the first time in 2018 at the tenth iteration of the Gay Games. At the Games, the BeesCats are not "official" representatives of the Brazilian government. Even if they view themselves this way, or at least take seriously their representative role, the Gay Games are not the same sort of government-sanctioned international competition that, say, the Olympics are. Whether recognized or not, though, the Gay Games *are* a depiction of the LGBT life of a place, and in that sense they are *also* an inextricable part of the nation. This chapter explores the ideological stances and activism of the BeesCats—representatives of openly gay Brazilian futebolistas—as they participate in the Gay Games, the world's most well-known international LGBT athletic event.

After briefly outlining my methods, I describe the tensions within the Gay Games that has followed the event since its inception. I present an international history of Brazilian *futebol masculino* as I consider what it means for a team from Brazil to be at the GG10 in Paris. Then, I establish the context of gay sports in Brazil through the formation of the LiGay and their insistence on *fair play*. Lastly, I examine

how the BeesCats perform when they go abroad, paying special attention to questions of nationalism and sport, presentations of gender and sexuality, and the meanings of futebol for cis gay athletes.

Methods and Sources

I conducted intensive ethnographic observations for a week in August during the 2018 Paris Gay Games and Cultural Events. My fieldwork with the team includes attendance at their games, conversations with players and supporters, interviews with Globo's local correspondent, and interviews they conducted with a YouTube channel called "Fresh Life". I read these observations for what they suggest about the possibilities and limits of queer futebol.

Details about the BeesCats' formation, participation in GG10 and their return to Brazil after the Games come from my conversations with sports journalist and *futebolista* Flávio Amaral, whom I met in Paris and have kept in touch with since via WhatsApp. Because the team is relatively new, there are no scholarly articles written about the BeesCats nor the LiGay, which is the Brazilian gay men's soccer league BeesCats helped form in 2017. I understand my work with Amaral as an initial documentation of the team's formation and first two years of existence.

In addition to analyzing the soccer matches, I reflect on cultural and organizational components of the 2018 Gay Games. Specifically, I analyze the opening and closing ceremonies, three parties hosted by the organizers, two days of cultural events, as well as the final General Assembly meeting held on Sunday, August 12. As I review my observation and interview notes, I focus on the queering

of sport and competition, the games' classificatory systems (in terms of nation, gender, etc.), and institutional considerations/policy making within the Federation Gay Games (the overarching organizational body).

The Politics of the Gay Games, From San Francisco 1982 – Paris 2018

The official rules that govern soccer are consistent; yet the politics and cultural significance of the game varies across time and space. In other words, the meanings of soccer are not simply a matter of its shared and constant features—a round ball, a square space and a designated number of players and minutes.[57] Rather, the sport is situated "in the matrix of politics, economics and ideology" (Elsey and Stanislao vi, 2017). This section illustrates the sport's "enmeshment within the social institutions and ideas of its day" (Goldblatt vii, 2006) by exploring the foundations of and frictions within the Gay Games— the body governing of the largest Olympic-style LGBT football competition.

[57] The idea that soccer is somehow removed from its context, comes from German football manager Sepp Herberger's response to a journalist after a 1954 World Cup game where West Germany triumphed over the favored Hungarian side in a match dubbed "the Miracle of Bern". In the interview, Sepp replied to a question about the nuances of the match by saying that only two things were true: "The ball is round. The game lasts 90 minutes. This much is fact. Everything else is theory" (Herberger qtd in Elsey and Stanislao vii, 2017).

The Gay Games is the most well-known LGBT amateur sporting competition, multi-day athletic and cultural festival. The first iteration of the Games took place in San Francisco in 1982 with the objectives of fostering pride and creating an avenue for lesbians and gays to be welcomed as full human beings in athletic contexts and society at large (Davidson 2006). Like the Olympics, the Gay Games happen every four years; so far they have taken place in the U.S., Canada, Europe and Australia. Unlike the Olympics, they are open to everyone, and anyone (people of any sexuality, ability, race, nationality, gender, etc.) can participate. In 2018, the tenth iteration of the Gay Games was held in Paris from August 1 - August 12, and the next Gay Games in 2022 will be held in Hong Kong.

The political tensions and affective hauntings that have been part of the Games since their inception have much to do with their founder, Dr. Thomas Waddell. Waddell, who was a cis-gendered, gay, decathlete and civil rights activist, christened the event the Gay Olympics. Waddell's relationship to the Olympic Games was complex, and it shaped what could have been the Gay Olympics. Waddell simultaneously glorified Olympic ideals and was rejected by the international sporting body that governs them (Davidson 2006, 91). According to Davidson:

> "Tom Waddell fervently believed in the 'higher' ideals of Olympism (often configured as education, equal opportunity, **fair play,** excellence and international goodwill) and wanted his Gay Olympics to embody those virtues. Waddell individualized the pursuit of excellence through athletics to become the mainstay mantra of the most current Gay Games, exhorting gay and lesbian athletes to individualistically excel 'despite' their sexuality. Waddell hoped that the ideals of Olympism would transcend the petty squabbling of the scandal-ridden 'real' Olympics and that true athletic competition could thrive" (Davidson 2006, 92, emphases mine).

Waddell's admiration for the Olympics was not reciprocated. The USOC - the U.S. Olympic Committee - took the GG organizers to court, and days before the first Games in 1982, they successfully issued an injunction that forbade the use of the "Olympic" title, hence "Gay Games". It is difficult to deny the action's homophobia: the Gay Games are, to date, the *only* group legally banned from using the Olympic moniker. Davidson argues that the shame of this homophobic rejection and forced name change, along with Waddell's death, haunts the GG and "motivates the production of a frenzied athletic event of urgent gay pride" (Davidson 2006, 91). Such factors also contribute to the Games' approach to competition and search for mainstream validation, even as they remain, somewhat paradoxically, open to all.

The central question in my opening story – whether and how LGBT athletics challenge hegemonic sport practices – is at the heart of the debates and conflicts that have followed the Games since their inception. These conflicts fall under the following themes, which I will explore in greater depth to situate GG football within the event's political, economic and ideological matrix: inclusive ideals versus exclusive practices/realities; separatism versus incorporation; queer politics versus politics of respectability. Such contradictions establish a context for reading the BeesCats' experiences navigating the GG10.

Visionary ideas that feed the Gay Games are not necessarily realized in the Games' sporting practices. "Inclusion, participation, and the achievement of one's personal best" is the GG motto, borne of the desire to create a sporting event that dismantled elitism, sexism, racism and nationalism. Manifestations of these systems of domination marked Waddell's experiences as an Olympic athlete in 1968, Mexico,

and the GG visionary aspired to realize an athletic event that worked to dismantle structural oppressions.[58] The Federation of Gay Games (FGG), comprised of 25 directors (from four continents), is responsible for organizing the events. According to Waddell's goals, the Games purport to welcome all participants "without regard to their sexual orientation, gender, race, religion, nationality, ethnic origin, political belief, physical ability, athletic/artistic ability or HIV status" (FGG 2001, 1). Despite these ideals, the Games have generated practices that are both exclusionary and universalizing. Scholars have pointed out that the overwhelming majority of participants are cis, male, white, Anglo, gay, able bodied, older (as compared to the average ages of Olympic athletes, for instance), from urban areas where there are organized LGBT sports clubs, and from wealthy nations in the Global North (Camargo and Rial 2011). These exclusions are due to a range of factors including pricing and the types of sporting events offered, which are modeled after the Olympics and reflective of western sporting traditions.

Still, the GGs' practices and policies are in flux. Exclusionary practices, like the original policy governing trans participation, can and do change. Caroline Symons and Dennis Hemphill track the FGG's gender policies from 1994 – 2002. The 1994 games in New York required a legal name change as well as letters from a medical physician and mental health professional verifying that an athlete had undergone

[58] This was the year, for instance, U.S. runners Tommy Smith and John Carlos were removed from the US Olympic team for raising their fists in protest of white supremacy and systemic racism.

hormone and talk therapy for the past two years. Trans athletes and activists criticized these policies on multiple fronts, namely for their reliance on Western medical professionals. In Amsterdam in 1998, the policies shifted again, but still required a letter from a physician confirming consistent hormone therapy for two years. Thanks to the activism of Indigenous athletes in Australia and Oceania, the 2002 Games in Sydney ushered in the most radically inclusive policy that determined gender in terms of social identity (Symons and Hemphill 2006, 119). To participate in the 2002 GG, sportspeople needed to provide a letter from any professional (including indigenous community workers) and proof of living in that gender for two years.

Notably, it is the international character of the event that motivates changes, which we see in the development of the FGG's gender policy from New York to Amsterdam to Sydney. It is significant that indigenous athlete-activists from the Global South were the ones to dismantle the Games' gender policy. Conversely, the International Olympic Committee (IOC), which consists almost exclusively of representatives from wealthy Global North nations, continues to discriminate against and exclude gender variant athletes, particularly women from the Global South, as in the case of Caster Semenya (Elsey and Karkazis 2019). Whether the FGG should mirror IOC guidelines or create their own policy is a point of contention (among FGG organizers who are also exclusively cis gendered). For some, such gender-inclusive rules appear possible only in the absence of elite-level competition. And although the GG say they welcome all, they also want to demonstrate that LGBT+ people are Olympic-level athletes. To align with the IOC is a form of respectability politics that seeks validation from mainstream competitive sporting culture. But to create their

own policy—and break with biased, Eurocentric, transphobic, and scientifically unfounded "gender testing" in the process—presents a possibility for the FGG to be trailblazers, and to influence other sporting bodies. Rather than respond to, or even adopt, the policies of often conservative institutions, LGBT+ athletes could make their own groundbreaking policies in venues such as the Gay Games that could then influence the mainstream. In other words, pursuing separatism (via a competition of their own) could influence gender-inclusiveness policy in other sporting institutions.

Another conflict the Gay Games stirs up is over the type of image such an event upholds: whether it represents a pursuit of respectability or a more radical queer agenda. This split manifests not only in how institutions organize LGBT athletics, but also how the games are played. One the one hand, Gay Games organizers have in the past sought to combat supposedly negative stereotypes like a gay obsession with sex or effeminate men (Symons and Hemphill 2006, 113). Early organizers actively squelched the performances of non-normative genders and sexualities by excluding, for instance, folks in leather, dykes on motorbikes, and drag queens. The FGG also felt pressure to model events along conventional sporting lines in order to "gain sanctioning from mainstream sport bodies and attract corporate sponsorship" (113). Here is a tension between wanting to show athletic prowess and gain acceptance, but also claiming to be inclusive to all who wish to compete. Later on, there were divisions about which components of the Games deserve the most energy and resources: the athletic games, the academic components, or the cultural festivities

(Symons 2010, 217 – 240).[59] The issues that surface in the larger FGG—regarding respectability politics over queer politics, chronic underfunding/lack of financial support, and trans inclusion—also play out in the formation and realization of the Brazilian delegation.

The 2018 Brazilian delegation to the Gay Games comprised forty-two athletes, compared with six from the previous iteration of the Games. This delegation included BeesCats Soccer Boys, the cis gay men's soccer team from Rio de Janeiro mentioned at the start of this chapter. Formed in 2017, the BeesCats are part of a surge of LGBT+ identified teams to emerge in Brazil beginning in the 2015s. They were the first team from Brazil to compete in football at the Gay Games, and their presence made waves, both at home and abroad.[60] While the BeesCats are the first openly gay team to represent Brazil overseas, the international history of (non-gay identified) *futebol masculino* establishes a context for reading the Brazilian sides' participation in this international LGBT sporting event.

An International History of Futebol Masculino

Just as the internationalization of the GG in the 1990s motivated change in sporting policy and practice, the internationalization of mainstream Brazilian men's futebol also transformed the sport. Both Brazilian cis men's soccer and Brazilian

[59] These conflicts eventually resulted in an organizational fracturing in 2006—between the Gay Games and the World Out Games.

[60] There was no selection process for the BeesCats to compete. Any team or individual athlete that is able to raise the funds may participate in the Gay Games.

national identity (which is articulated through *futebol masculino*) took on new meaning in their travels abroad. From the time in 1914 when the first men's team was created to represent Brazil overseas, the relationship between Brazilian national identity and international competition was evident. Three distinct logics informed ideas about international competition in the early 1900s, as Gregg Bocketti notes: some commentators viewed international contests as a sort of training for national teams to improve, and were thus particularly excited about matches against England, whom Brazilians viewed as the world's best and to whom they gave credit for introducing football to the Latin Americas. Others saw international competition as "opportunities to craft and express their individual, group, and, ultimately, national identities, for they allowed for the possibility of careful planning and deep meaning" (Bocketti 2016, 118). Organizers can engineer tournaments to decide against whom they will play, and they can also control the image they wish to project about their nation via the players they put on the field. Players and fans, Bocketti asserts, "drew their own conclusions about these games, extraordinary opportunities for the invention and public performance of nationality" (118).

Initially, organizer's goals were not to win, but to broadcast a version of Brazil that assimilated European ideals. In other words, a selective sort of visibility and futebol—also seen in the other cases examined in this dissertation—have gone hand-in-hand since the early 1900s. According to ideals of the time, the Brazilian side comprised athletes who were cis "male, white, wealthy, cultured and amateur" (Bocketti 2016, 118). But beginning in the 1920's, Brazilian men's teams began to win against European teams, and this winning motivated a desire for more winning,

which meant featuring players who were the best athletes, as opposed to racially "ideal".[61] Using this new criterion, working-class, black, and geographically diverse players were incorporated on the Brazilian men's team. Nationalists and populists provided additional reasoning for the inclusion of such players: doing so would prove that "Brazilians had discarded Eurocentrism for nationalism, exclusivity for inclusion, and privilege for democracy" (Bocketti 2016, 119). This democratization of soccer, perhaps unsurprisingly, did not reach the upper echelons of governing bodies, who remained and who remain, Brazil's wealthy, white, heterosexual-identified, male elite.

Despite the maintenance of power among sports management, the diversity of the players and the achievements of working class non-white male players projected on the global stage and provided Brazilians a sense of national pride. Seeing themselves represented before the world, and indeed as victorious against their European competitors, inspired Brazilians to reevaluate their *seleção* (national team), and vicariously, their nation. In Bocketti's words "they believed they saw a European football plagued by decadence and even corruption, and they became more comfortable in claiming the sport as their own and using it to proclaim Brazil's emergence as a better country, ready to take its rightful place on the world stage" (158). So marks the "golden age of Brazilian [men's] football" spanning from 1933,

[61] For the record, it has not seemed to matter if women win. Despite the Brazilian women's *seleção*'s impressive record, they have not received more acclaim or resources.

when the modality was professionalized, to 1970, after the *seleção masculino,* the men's national team, won their third World Cup (Gordon and Helal 2002, 142).[62] During this period, futebol was largely run by the state and was central to national and modernizing projects.

In the 1970's, however, Brazilian futebol entered what many refer to as a state of crisis. According to soccer scholars Cesar Gordon and Ronaldo Helal the crisis was a result of macro-level historical shifts. Namely, when futebol was no longer a state-sponsored vehicle to promote nationalism, it splintered into disunited niches, under a combination of market interest and post-modern identity politics. The timeline for this supposed crisis began after the World Cup win in 1970 when the State initiated massive soccer-related building projects and investments. But then the men's seleção lost in '74, stadiums and soccer culture became marred by violence and bankruptcy, and the economy entered a period of recession and inflation. Trying to alleviate financial pressures, clubs began selling players to European teams in 1982. Live television coverage of games surged in 1987, and this prompted new negotiations about broadcast rights. Up until the 1990's, though sport was largely still regulated by the State. A series of laws passed in 1993 named 'project zico' changed that. These laws reduced the role of the state and turned power over to the clubs, who were tasked with transforming them into profitable enterprises (Gordon and Helal 2002, 151). The newly empowered clubs were, and continue to be, rife with scandal. Like the Brazilians of the 1930s who claimed ethical superiority over unscrupulous

[62] The Brazilian men's team won the World Cup in 1958, 1962 and 1970.

European teams, gay futebolistas, who emerged in 2015, declared their moral superiority over an increasingly unethical Brazilian soccer.[63]

The Founding of the BeesCats and the Forming of the LiGay

The rise of gay men's soccer in Brazil occurred in 2015 amidst a corrupted Brazilian *futebol.* One team's story begins here: screenwriter André Machado was watching a TV program "Encontro" in April 2017, when he saw journalist Fátima Bernardes's report on the Unicorns FC, a gay men's futebol team from São Paulo that formed in 2015. Inspired by Unicorns, Machado, who was born in São Paulo but now resides in Rio de Janeiro, decided to form a similar team in Rio. The team, BeesCats Soccer Boys (a play on "biscates só querem boys" which translates as "the little sluts only want boys"), meets weekly in the *zona sul* (south zone) of the city. Within a few weeks of the team's formation (June 2017), the "Encontros de BeesCats" became a gay hangout, uniting a hundred people to play, watch, meet with friends and listen to music-- a DJ even comes and spins during practices.

The team's founding members were determined to show that gay men play soccer, and to counter the idea that futebol is a strictly heterosexual space. According to Flávio Amaral, one of the team's founders and *craques* (star players) "the focus was always on representation, with emphasis on the renewal of passion for futebol and the overcoming of traumas acquired during infancy and adolescence, when the

[63] Is it easier to be moral when you are on the margins? If players from the LiGay suddenly had access to the mainstream, would they lose their radical edges? There is no way to be sure, but it is a question worth tracking.

athletes felt excluded from the sport due to prejudiced attitudes" (Amaral and Bueno 2018, 8). Similar to other queer or “marked” athletes, the BeesCats cannot simply play futebol, they feel the need to represent their community, to show that gay men are also futebolistas. The language of overcoming the trauma of exclusion speaks to the depth of what the national sport means for Brazilians. Futebol is synonymous with Brazil, so to be excluded from soccer is to be kept out of a crucial form of national belonging. Re-entering into futebol is claiming a national birthright.

As the weekly BeesCats games grew in size and notoriety, the team attracted amateur players from around Rio, many of whom had played in cis men’s leagues. But “renewing” means that even as the BeesCats change some features of the game, they also reproduce characteristics of the hegemonic futebol they grew up in. For instance, the relaxed environment of the games, Amaral asserts, helped participants "accept their sexual orientation" (9). "Uniting this 'liberation'," Amaral continues, with "technical quality," a competitive team called the *Seleção BeesCats* formed to dispute championships around the country. In other words, queering the game so that the emphasis is on enjoyment and relaxation helped gay athletes feel comfortable not only in the game but also in their sexuality. But also, leaders created a tiered system that divided players according to skill. So, while some BeesCats played for fun, others, like those selected for the travel team, played to win. Because cis gay men were born with certain access to futebol, there are aspects of the dominant forms of playing, such as creating a hierarchical system, that go unchallenged in the team’s organization.

On June 2017, the elite team travelled to São Paulo to compete in the first inter-state tournament sponsored by the app Hornet (a Brazilian version of the app “Grinder," which may be familiar to U.S. readers) and named Taça Hornet da Diversidade. The championship inspired the creation of the following teams: Alligaytors (RJ), Bharbixas (MG), Bravus (DF), Sereyos (SC), and Magia (RS). The competition united the directorate of the BeesCats, Unicorns and Futeboys (SP), who created the LiGay Nacional de Futebol. This league would become responsible for organizing competitions between Brazil's gay-identified teams. Out of this union emerged the Champions LiGay, a tournament that brought together participants from the Taça Hornet for a huge competition in Rio called the "Brazileirão gay". The tournament took place in November 2017 at Rio Sport in the upscale neighborhood of Barra da Tijuca.

In a presentation for the *VII Seminário de Pesquisas em Mídia e Cotidiano*, Amaral and Bueno (2018) recount the tournament that united 120 players and note the pervasive joy they believe is characteristic of LGBT+ competition. They describe each match as beginning with "smiles, athletes from both sides hugging each other, wishing one another a good game...loyalty and honesty set the tone of the games, with players admitting when they had erred, even if the ref wrongly ruled in their favor" (Amaral and Bueno 2018, 9). The authors maintain that, in this way, the athletes are changing the image of futebol as aggressive and full of "*malandragem*", or trickery. BeesCats founder André Machado asserts: "this culture of *fair play*, especially in traditional tournaments, is the best way to combat any prejudice, because we create empathy with our adversaries. The team has an important mission. I prefer to lose and

play fair than to win unfairly" (Machado qtd in Amaral and Bueno 2018, 10).[64] Even if they aim to compete, then, the BeesCats choose to compete less aggressively and more fairly. They hope to both gain the respect and change the nature of an assumed homophobic mainstream soccer in the process, which is one way they may be queering soccer.

Read another way, though, is their playing differently a pitch for acceptance? Do the BeesCats have to be exceptional and play exceptionally to be treated well by "traditional teams"? To take this line of reasoning a step further: must they claim the moral high ground in futebol—by insisting on "fair play", and refusing *malandragem* and aggression—to "compensate" for what is perceived as their sexual, moral failings? In casting "jogo justo/limpo" (just or clean play) as an ethics of the LiGay, they counter the discourses that link gayness to dishonor and subversion. In a league of their own, gay athletes can craft their narrative and, to an extent, determine their rules of engagement. And yet, as Machado makes clear in his quote above, it is the specter of the "traditional" leagues, with whom the BeesCats seek to "create empathy" and to "combat prejudice," that seems to motivate their virtuous "mission".

At the same time, the BeesCats place themselves as ethically superior to the traditional teams they seek acceptance from. The proclaimed justness of the LiGay responds to the corruption of mainstream *futebol masculino*. This same righteous tactic is found in Waddell's configurations of the Gay Games, which he envisioned as

[64] The idea of "fair play", a term coined by FIFA—arguably one of most corrupt, least "fair" organizations—is also rife with contradiction.

an appeal to the higher ideals of the Olympics that were not being carried out in the contemporary Games. The LiGay's approaches, then, are connected (if unintentionally) to the *modus operandi* of gay athletics in other places. However, the specificities of the BeesCats' stance must be understood in the context of Brazil's political history given the charged relationship between morality and (homo)sexuality.

"Fair Play" and Morality: Pitches for Acceptance

The BeesCats team players' actions at the 2018 GG soccer final described in the opening anecdote speak to the team's insistence on "fair play": characterized by honesty, an ethical approach to sport, and respect for the rules of the game. Although the BeesCats use the English term "fair play," in Portuguese this concept translates as "jogo limpo," clean play, or "jogo justo," just play. According to the team's founder André Machado, this approach to futebol is foundational both to his team and to the gay men's soccer league, the Brazilian LiGay, of which they are a part.[65] The BeesCats seek to win over, or at least placate, potential detractors in conventional heteronormative leagues by rising above not only above the presumed homophobia of their adversaries, but also the aggression and cheating that is imagined to be a part of competitive sport at every level. I propose that this tactic of gaining respect by taking the moral high ground is one of the ways athletes engage in making themselves more acceptable.

[65] Founded in 2016, the LiGay comprises 48 teams who hail from urban areas in central and south Brazil.

Declaring gay ethical superiority in futebol may seem ironic, given longer histories of how gender and sexuality in Brazil are regulated. Right-wing discourses have depicted non-heteronormative behavior as deviant, unpatriotic and therefore, unacceptable. The links between morality and homophobia have been fruitfully explored in Ben Cowan's *Securing Sex: Morality and Repression in the Making of Cold War Brazil*, which argues that the state, working in conjunction with transnational networks of conservative thinkers and policy makers, squelched dissent by linking communism to a host of non-conforming sexualities and "subversive" behaviors. Cowan traces how right-wing ideology,

> …—which classified moral, cultural and sexual ruptures as cornerstones of a subversive conspiracy—[played a] role in shaping dictatorial Brazil's security theory, policy, and practice. Anticommunist countersubversion, in Brazil and internationally, exceeded ideological opposition to Marxism and determinatively subsumed other, conflated anxieties—signaling, as [the book] demonstrate[s], anxieties about gender, sex, youth, and modernity… (Cowan 2016, 2-3).

Cowan's account reveals how the right-wing machinery linked queer genders and sexualities with subversion, and then created moral panic about these to justify a slew of authoritarian policies. Gay people's purported dissolution, according to definitions of morality laid out by anticommunist rightwing thinkers and policy makers, was perceived as a threat to the state. Such threats to the 'traditional family,' defined as heterosexual, justified violent repression including the imprisonment, torture and disappearance of hundreds of civilians by the Brazilian military regime. Cowan's analysis is particularly pertinent in today's Brazil, in light of the country's 2018 election of ultra-right wing President Jair Bolsonaro— a man who praises the dictatorship of the 60s, who regularly denounces socialism and communism, and who

openly spouts homophobic, misogynist, and racist discourse. So while it might appear surprising that the BeesCats' platform is to play more "justo," more in line with the rules of the game, it makes sense that they should make a point to *be* the very thing—in this case, be (more) moral—that has historically been levied against them. Differently stated, if a moralistic right accuses non-heteronormative subjects of depravity to justify oppression, then for the LiGay to assert righteousness in futebol is an understandable, and potentially powerful, appropriation.

Another way to read the BeesCats maneuvering is as a response to political right's often paradoxical application of conservative theory. Cowan names several discrepancies that trouble the moralist rights' agenda. First, despite accusations by actors on the right, the political left during and after Cold War Brazil did not, in fact, embrace sexual liberation. In São Paulo, a solidified gay rights group within the PT (*Partido dos Trabalhadores*, or PT) emerged only in 1992, and the party did not formally recognize an LGBT "sector" until 2001 (Dehesa 2010, 81-83). Another point of contention is that conservative law makers had competing interests that played out in paradoxical ways. An example of this, according to Cowan, was the Cold War military regime's desire to promote a national film industry that resulted in the (anti-moralist) production of soft-core pornography (Cowan 246). Such discrepancies in the political right's platform, that continue into the late 2010s, make for varied responses from those (like the athletes in the LiGay) who wish to challenge enduring, if unstable, conservative ideals. In other words, the inconsistencies of rightwing moralists require perhaps unexpected adaptation by people who are targeted by their crusades, such as LGBT+ identified Brazilians.

Far from being a thing of the past, the rise to power of an often erratic, moralist right is unfolding in 2019, signaled in the October 2018 election of Bolsonaro. And like the political left of the Cold War, much of Brazil's contemporary political left remains equivocal around issues of gender and sexuality. The conservatism and contentions of Cold War histories continue to play out in contemporary Brazil, as policy makers seek to placate multiple constituencies whose goals are often at odds. In an extreme recent example of this disorientation, on March 8, 2019, Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro tweeted a video taken during carnival. The 40-second clip that Bolsonaro shared shows a man on a stage, wearing a vest and what looks like a black leather jockstrap, dancing before a cheering crowd. The man on stage is using his hands to play with his anus before bending over to have the back of his head and neck peed on (consensually) by another man on the stage.[66] The video, intended to incite moral outrage, was shared by Bolsonaro calling for people to "be aware and have their priorities" (in Bolsonaro's own words). It was instead received with confusion over why the president of a country would tweet pornography. In their replies to the post, numerous self-proclaimed evangelical Christians, who indicated they had voted for him, were outraged that Bolsonaro had shared the video, even if he supposedly did so in the name of indignation. While the President's tweet—as well as his follow up tweet that asked "what is a golden shower?"—are baffling on many levels, what remains clear is the link he insinuates between homosexuality and perversion. It is a link that draws on deeper histories of

[66] For tweet see: https://twitter.com/jairbolsonaro/status/1103069837876711425

rightwing thought. Wittingly or unwittingly, his request for followers to "comment and draw your conclusions" can be read a gauge of the public's response to both the video and his post. Adding another layer to the scenario, many speculate that the presidential tweet was a response to carnival-goers all over Brazil dedicating *blocos* and signs to the message #BolsonaroVaiTomarNoCu, which literally means "Bolsonaro, go take it up the ass" (similar to the English-language expression "up yours"). The popular phrase is an example of everyday homophobia that permeates language and culture, even in leftist protests. I draw on this exchange because it points to lingering connections between the moralist right and anti-gay discourse but also because it lays bare the pervasiveness of homophobic discourse across political spectrums. Bolsonaro and his opponents regularly mobilize homophobia, and queer people continue to find themselves demonized on multiple fronts.

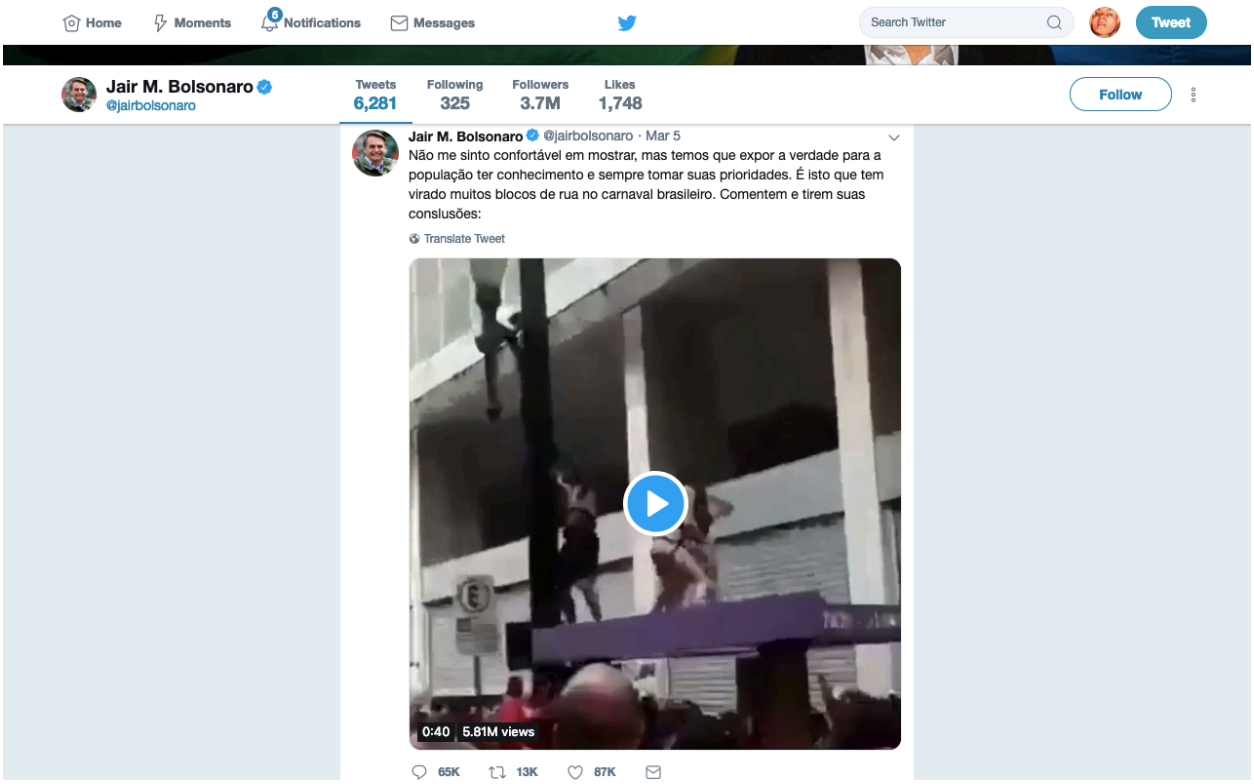

FIG 3.1: Screenshot of tweet from President Jair M. Bolsonaro, March 5, 2019.

It is in this charged environment that the LiGay formed and persists. Dealing with confusing and contradictory homophobia from multiple sides of the political spectrum, the BeesCats seek sexual acceptance through their virtuous playing. Their insistence on fair play as a way to fulfill their "mission" to "create empathy with [their] adversaries" is an example of *fielding futebol,* or maneuvering within systems of oppression, like heterosexism, in ways that disrupt but also uphold such systems.

The fear that gay futebolistas incite, and then must navigate, is due in part to the what queer theorists would argue is a latent queerness that is always already part of homosocial sports. As homosocial spaces rife with opportunity for same-sex pleasures of the flesh, sports are particularly policed by a heteropatriarchal moralist

code. Such policing happens most often through "homophobic bullying" that takes the form of harassment, ridicule, shunning or threat and that drives down the participation of (out) LGBT+ people in sport (Brackenridge et. al. 2007, 122). The LiGay "fair play" philosophy is one way gay athletes in Brazil field anxieties over gender and sexuality fueled by the ideological right. Even as the BeesCats stand on shifting and uneven political terrain, they attempt to queer soccer by using some of the same moralistic tools that are meant to oppress them.

These tools are not unique to the LiGay or to the BeesCats, and in fact can be found in transnational arenas as well, although BeesCats' approaches speak to the specificities of Brazilian contexts. For instance, although neither Waddell nor BeesCats knew about each other directly—Waddell died before the BeesCats came into existence, and the BeesCats did not know about the Gay Games until after a year of the team's formation—both invoke the same concept of fair play as an aspirational form of conduct. Such an overlap points to a connection between gay and virtuous athletics. Both Waddell and BeesCats turn to the ideal of fair play as an intervention into a corrupt, broken sporting system. Drawing on his experience as an Olympic athlete, Waddell seeks acceptance for LGBT+ sportspersons by creating his own (more honorable) version the Olympics, which loom large in the U.S. imaginary. The BeesCats, in turn, draw from their expertise as futebolistas and seek to make change in their country's national sport by making it more inclusive. They do so, in part, by seeking acceptance by adjusting and adapting their philosophies of play to the Brazilian context.

When the BeesCats went to the GG Paris 2018, the context shifted from the national to the international. Previous sections in this chapter highlighted the increased visibility that accompanied the internationalization of both Brazilian *futebol masculino* (in the 1910s) and the Gay Games (in the 1990s). Similarly, playing on the global stage presented a chance for the BeesCats to raise their profile and to broadcast their agenda. Furthermore, competing overseas also provided an opportunity for the BeesCats to (re)define themselves in relation to other cis gay men's teams, to advance their cause in solidarity with queer players from all over the world, and to represent their nation. They sought to use the venue of an international competition to push for changes both at home and abroad.

Nation, Sport, and the "Little Sluts"

By the time the Gay Games Paris 2018 began, the LiGay had gone from six teams to 42 teams, all within the span of a year. Part of this growth, as compared to LBT+ teams, can be attributed to demographics: in absolute numbers, there are more men in Brazil who identify as gay, compared to LBT+ folks. But it is also evidence that cis gay men have more access to futebol. The cis male privileges LiGay players have experienced—underlined via their access to professional possibilities and their ability to quickly mobilize a substantial gay men's league—points to the advantages they continue to receive compared to many of their women-identified and LBT+ compatriots.[67] Unlike non cis-male athletes who did not have access to soccer in the

[67] While there are no cis or trans women players in the LiGay, they are present in other way. During the first LiGay competition, two women acted as referees, and two

first place, a number of gay futebolistas like Douglas played in their youth. For many such gay futebolistas, a base of knowledge, skills, and experience was already there, just waiting to be activated. It is also true, if the BeesCats are a representative sample, that many of the LiGay players enjoy more social and economic privileges. The majority of players on the BeesCats are high income earners—the players I met were lawyers, doctors, engineers, TV producers, and foreign service officers—who can afford domestic and foreign travel for competitions. A major reason that the BeesCats were the first delegation to represent Brazil in football at the Games was because they had the most available resources to get there, including personal resources and sponsorship.

The BeesCats, then, were able to represent Brazil because of their class privilege. Once they reached the games, however, they were one of two teams from

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teams that were coached by women placed in the top four. Alessandra Melo, coach of Magia (Rio Grande do Sul), has struggled over the past 12 years to find coaching opportunities. Working within the LiGay, she says, is an "opportunity to break taboos and make history" (Amaral and Bueno 2018, 13). For Renata Lobo, former player on Brazil's national team and coach of the BeesCats, women coaching teams in the LiGay is a path toward occupying leadership roles in Brazilian futebol, writ large. In this way, besides the BeesCats commitment to changing certain aspects of hegemonic football through their sportsmanship, they are rewriting tradition by hiring women into leadership roles.

Latin America. In fact, Brazil and Mexico were the only countries that were *not* European, Australian or from Oceania, or U.S. American. In other words, they might be economically privileged compared to other LGBT+ teams in Brazil, but on an international scale the BeesCats stood alone in a sea of global northern wealth. Whereas in Brazil, the BeesCats view themselves as representatives of LGBT+ futebol, in France they came to see themselves as representatives of Brazilian futebol, more broadly.

While any international sporting evening is saturated with ethnosexual messages about competitors, an event that is explicitly dedicated to folks with queer sexual identities raises distinct questions. What happens to the category of nation, presumed heterosexual (Nagel 2002, 166), when it is LGBT+ athletes who take up the flag? In 2017 when the LiGay emerged, they pushed the national sport to consider another frontier in the list of exclusions: sexuality. Although Gordon and Helal (2002) would consider this a sort of fragmentation along identarian lines that weakens soccer by deemphasizing the nation, the BeesCats' affirmation of their Brazilianness counters such an assertion.

On 1/16/2019 I reached out to Flávio Amaral to talk about the BeesCats' motivations for competition in GG10, what it meant for them to be representing Brazil (as the first soccer delegation), and what it continues to mean now, months after their return. I began by asking how they decided to come to Paris. In 2017, shortly after the BeesCats formed, Machado heard about the Gay Games from a friend who had competed in the GG9, Cleveland, and that the 10th iteration would be in Paris, 2018. The BeesCats decided to put their all into going to GG10. Machado

was able to secure sponsorship from 269ChiliPepper sauna, which is supposedly the largest gay men's sauna in Latin America.[68] In my conversation with Amaral, the context became clearer:

> Cara Snyder (henceforth CS): So after you knew about the Gay Games, what made you want to go?
> Amaral: The opportunity to take LGBT football abroad
> CS: Why is that important or desirable, in your opinion?
> Amaral: Showing that our movement **can go much further** than creating teams all over the country.
> CS: And what did it mean for you to represent Brazil in the Games?
> Amaral: It meant **BeesCats's pioneering** in our journey of **making LGBT football more visible in media**, as a way of **making LGBT people in Brazil aware of this opportunity** of **playing a sport they love in a safe, harmonic and sociable way**. For Brazilian LGBT people - and even more for gay teams players, it was **a milestone of inclusion in sport in our countr**y.[69]
> (WhatsApp, 1/16/2019, my emphases)

Amaral's quote points to how international competition is perceived to motivate change on national and local scales.[70] He frames their participation in games in France as a milestone of inclusion in Brazil. Other key motivators to compete in the GG 10 were media visibility, both for LGBT football in general and for the BeesCats

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[68] In my conversations with Machado at the GG10, he did not share details about fundraising or sponsorship. He mentioned, in vague terms, that money from the sauna was distributed evenly across team members to help with housing costs, and that players who needed extra financial help were given a bit more money.

[69] Since I communicate with Flávio in English, I am directly quoting him here.

[70] Beyond sport, LGBT and human rights *militantes* in Brazil have activated transnational networks to lobby for local change during various moments. See for instance, Green 2010.

in particular. Finally, there is the imperative to show that soccer can be played in a different way.

Does the marker LGBT+ necessarily make their team less Brazilian? If Amaral often qualifies the BeesCats' futebol as *LGBT football*, he also thinks of their team in broader, national, terms. Later in the conversation, for instance, Amaral is recounting the significance back home of their participation abroad and he likens the BeesCats to the *seleção*:

> During the days in Paris, we watched a video recorded by some of our friends. They were in an event in *Aterro do Flamengo*, close to the place where we gather our friends for leisure football play, the weekly 'BeesCats meetings'. In this video, they were like a supporting crowd screaming what we call 'grito de guerra', like 'war songs' or 'war shouts'... It made us feel like: 'wow, look at how much they trust us!' **We felt like a Brazil national team playing the World Cup abroad**!
> (WhatsApp, 1/16/2019, my emphases)

The way the BeesCats represent themselves depends on the context. Against non-gay identified teams, they become the gay team. At regional LGBT tournaments they become the team from Rio. In this international LGBT event, they become unqualified representatives of their nation.

Because the Gay Games organizers wish to emphasize that the LGBT+ community is neither separated by nor confined within national borders, the GG are less driven by national competition than the Olympics. Nonetheless, many teams playing in the GG identify according to their country of origin, and the Games contain certain elements, like the national procession in the opening ceremonies, that mirror the Olympic emphasis on nation-state. A central part of the opening

ceremonies, the GG procession, is modeled after the Olympic Games' Parade of Nations, where athletes file across the stadium, grouped by nation.[71]

The opening events in Paris took place on August 4, 2018 at the Jean Bouin Stadium. There were four main parts to the proceeding: a meeting of athletes in front of the stadium, an "official" portion with speeches (from various supporting institutions, the FGG, and Paris 2018 co-presidents), a parade into the stadium, and finally a show. The ceremony began with remarks from several politicians, one of whom was from a conservative party and was booed off the stage.[72] This was

[71] Cultural events like the opening ceremonies have grown in importance, but this has been a source of tension amongst the FGG. Some organizers wish to dedicate more resources to the cultural activities while others believe that emphasis should be on athletics. Ultimately, though, those decisions rest on the local organizing committee; it depends on how much money they are able to raise, and how they wish to allot those resources. At every GG, the opening ceremony is the crown jewel of the cultural events. Each opening ceremony has its own flavor, which is a reflection of the priorities of the local communities involved in the GG. My experience at the opening ceremonies speaks to how the local (Paris) interacts with the overarching governing body (the FGG). My observations provide additional examples of the many tensions—such as queer politics vs politics of respectability—that play out in this international LGBT+ event.

[72] Unfortunately, I could not locate the name and party of this politician.

possibly the queerest thing I saw in the opening ceremonies. After an hour of opening remarks, the parade began.

During the procession, two Masters of Ceremony (MCs)—one cis woman, one cis man, both white— spoke in French and English as they narrated the parade. They announced that there were 10,000 LGBT athletes from 90 countries competing in 36 different sporting events. Of the countries represented, they shared, homosexuality is illegal in 20 of them. At the 2018 Games, around 3,000 of the total number of athletes were from the United States and another 3,000 were from France, with the U.K. and Germany also showcasing sizable delegations. Indeed, the United States had so many athletes that they were divided by state, which every other member was identified by Country. In some cases, the U.S. groups were divided by city, such as a separate San Francisco contingent. Perhaps because of the sheer size of the delegation, or perhaps for other reasons, the audience seemed to stop clapping for the United States. While the parade was meant to be unifying in terms of displaying that LGBT+ athletes exist in every corner of the world, it could also be read as a divisive show of power in terms of the disproportionate representation of athletes from the U.S. and Europe.

Groups of athletes were accompanied by a volunteer holding a sign with that country's name, in English. Like the Olympics, participation in the parade is optional, and many of the countries had no marchers to walk with the sign holder. Saudi Arabia, for instance, had 6 athletes compete but they did not march in the procession, supposedly to avoid their photos being made public on the internet. To my surprise, the procession was rather boring: I expected it to feel more like the pride parades I've

taken part in, but this did not feel like a pride parade- it had none of the festive elements like costume, dancing or music. This absence speaks to the lasting effects of Waddell's insistence on respectability politics. Athletes were dressed in jumpsuits or athletic gear that donned their flags or country colors. The only delegation that dressed in vibrant costumes— and the only athletes I saw in drag—were from México. The procession was a visual representation of the Games' demographics, which comprised mostly cisgender white-men from wealthy nations.[73]

After the long procession, which lasted another hour, the stadium went black, and a voice speaking in English with a French accent came from the speakers. The narrator emerged from where the audience was sitting, strutting down the stairs onto the stage. A black tux and a cape adorned his thin frame and he wore heavy eyeliner that made his eyes pop. His opening comments spoke about how fitting it was that the Gay Games should take place in this most liberal of cities, Paris, in this most progressive of countries, France. He asked that we "take the values of liberté, egalité, fraternité" that are part of the French fabric, and "spread them around the world"—a

[73] Later, speaking to Joanie Evans—who is a soccer player born in Jamaica and raised in the U.K. and who was the only woman-identified member of the GG executive board at the opening ceremonies— she confirmed that less than 25% of attendees were women. The estimated cost of the games including airfare, registration and meals is $2,500.00 USD. Because the games are so expensive, the athletes tended to be older and from richer countries.

remark conveying little self-reflexivity about French colonialism.[74] The tuxedoed MC narrated us through the rest of the evening, which included a singer in a shiny cape, dancers, a strange and somewhat sexist play about a lonely French man pursuing and conquering a woman, and an acrobatic performance. The audience significantly thinned following the procession, and the event continued to bleed people, until by the end there were only a few hundred of us left. The ceremonies certainly say more about the beliefs and priorities of the organizers from Paris, France, than they do about LGBT+ athletics writ large. And yet, in moments like the parade of nations (which happen consistently at every iteration of the GG), the GG demonstrate how LGBT+ athletics may queer sport by challenging its assumed heterosexuality *and* may also seek acceptance from the mainstream by performing respectability and nationalism.

As many of the athletes to parade in the opening ceremonies, the BeesCats exist in an in-between space, participating as a gay team—which is, to an extent, an identity outside of a national one— while nonetheless representing their home country. Their presence allows for selective queering of sporting traditions. The BeesCats' emphasis, as with many other LGBT+ sports, is on representation and visibility rather than winning. Such an emphasis becomes magnified on a transnational scale:

> CS: You mean your participation in Paris motivated change back home in Brazil? How so?

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[74] Not only does the message harken to colonial histories, it ignores surges of homophobic violence in France.

> Amaral: Changes could not be seen exactly through actions, but **through the way teams looked at us**. We were known as 'the team that played at the Gay Games and brought the silver medal to Brazil' in LiGay and other tournaments. **We certainly took Brazilian LGBT football to another level in terms of visibility and projection**. That can be mentioned as a real change.
> CS: That's really interesting! What do you think would be the reaction if you didn't place in the top three? And was this part of your initial goal- to make space in Brazil? Or have you been surprised? Do teams outside the LiGay know and care about the victory?
> Amaral: I honestly believe that, whatever our result was, our goal had already been achieved. **Getting to Paris was our biggest objective, and we reached that. Our result would be a second step that, actually, didn't matter much in terms of goals scored and matches won.** Actually, other teams were much more concerned and worried [cared more] about our presence in Paris than our final result. Since the start of this plan, everybody knew our main goal. At *Copa Sudeste* and the 3rd LiGay, the tournaments right after Gay Games, most of the comments were like 'how amazing you made it to Paris!', and then I used to say: 'yeah, it was incredible! But losing the gold medal in the last minute was terrible...'. The response were: 'so what? YOU MADE IT!'
> (WhatsApp, 1/16/2019, my emphases)

Amaral's emphasis on the power of being seen provides insight into how the BeesCats view visibility as a vehicle for progress. The value of recognition from compatriots is difficult to quantify, compared to, say policy amendments, but that does not discount the way visibility is understood as a measure of change. The key to the amplified attention that the BeesCats and LiGay experienced at the GG10 was the fact of international recognition.

Amaral's statement below confirms this point:

> …**Taking Brazilian LGBT football's name abroad is a big responsibility, and even bigger because of how fast things went in our movement**. Less than one year after the creation of Champions LiGay - supposed to be Brazil's biggest LGBT football tournament, like an 'LGBT Brasileirão', one of the founder teams goes to France to represent our football! This was an achievement, indeed!
> (WhatsApp, 1/16/2019, my emphases)

Like the cis women athletes described in the previous chapters who use their experiences abroad to jockey for rights in their country of birth (and for the rights of sportswomen around the world), the BeesCats similarly used this international LGBT+ competition to motivate change in their home country. Participating in the GG10 was a way to legitimize and add weight to a movement of LGBT+ athletics in Brazil that grew exponentially between 2016 – 2018. They also wanted to build a name for *their* team in particular, and to represent Brazil for the world. Amaral makes clear that winning was not the goal of playing: the goal was to share the stories of the players and the team, both for general audiences and for other LGBT+ people in Brazil.

Besides Amaral and Machado, one of the most covered BeesCats athletes is Douglas Braga. Braga played soccer professionally but stopped doing so when he was no longer willing to remain in the closet. Braga's story, which I analyze in the next section, is compelling for what is says about the ongoing struggles for LGBT+ futebolistas in Brazil.

Douglas Braga and the Brazilian Futebolistas That Never Were

The acute awareness that comes from being different, the feeling of being under a microscope that is so often the "minority" experience in "majority" environments, leads to what is perceived as a double bind: to integrate, and be forced to conform in the process, or to separate, thereby leaving the "norm" intact. This double bind plays out in the tension between wanting to change soccer's mainstream—which gay men's teams have more access to than cis women and trans players—and creating a league of one's own. Such tensions become apparent in the

framing of one of the BeesCats' most well-known players, Douglas Braga, referred to by the BBC as the "Brazilian footballer that never was" (Maybin and Baker 2019).[75] At age 12, Braga moved to Rio to pursue the dream of being a professional footballer. At 18, he was drafted by Botafogo, who were national champions at the time. He realized he was gay around the same time he was drafted, and by 21 Braga left the league because, as he saw it, "it was a choice that either you're yourself, or you're a footballer. It just wasn't possible to be both" (Maybin and Baker 2019, 2). A conversation I recorded between Braga and a reporter from Globo on August 6 at the Gay Games[76] expands on this point.

[76] Here I draw from my fieldnotes; the reporter's piece did not make it into the televised news.

FIG 3.2: Facebook post from the referee ("Mama"), sharing the BBC article about Douglas Braga

The reporter asked whether Braga's teammates on his professional team knew he was gay, and if so, how they felt about it. He responds:

> *"Então*, none of them knew. This was incompatible with the dream [of being a soccer player]. If any of them knew, they would have denied my abilities, they would have berated me if they knew I was not a hetero[sexual] person. And this is really...when you look back, when you are out and look back, you see how much this not being yourself affected you/defined you as an athlete. The truth is it doesn't matter. Today, years later, almost everyone knows. But I never had the courage to say it [that I was gay]. I knew if I lived openly, spoke directly, I wouldn't have the career I dreamed about. Unfortunately, *a gente* [queer people] still live in this reality in sport, principally in futebol which is totally heteronormative, in Rio and throughout Brazil."

Even though sexual identity does not impact athletic performance, having to "pass" as heterosexual tainted Braga's experiences and his love of the game. Braga left because if he were to live and play as an openly gay man, he would be the only professional-level *futebolista* to do so. No top level Brazilian male soccer player has

ever come out as gay. The very real threat of homophobic violence as well as the knowledge that being out can put one's life at risk is a powerful deterrent to playing as an openly gay man. To expect a person to stand up, knowing they might stand alone, is perhaps unrealistic in light of the violence against LGBT+ people in Brazil.[77] The idea that futebol is "totally heteronormative"—which is assumed for cis *men*'s soccer, since women's soccer is marked as a queer space—is a self-fulfilling dictum because it either keeps gay players in the closet or pushes them out of professional leagues altogether, thereby affirming the sport's supposed straightness.

The BeesCats see the LiGay as a movement that stands to potentially break this cycle. They want to change the sport's homophobic culture by exposing the queerness that already exists in futebol and by creating a critical mass of gay athletes to stand up together. In an interview with the same Globo reporter on August 6, 2018 at the GG10, Machado articulates this vision:

> "Today we do a mapping and there are 42 [gay men's] teams in the country. So I think that us (the BeesCats) coming back victorious, or us participating in a game like this [the Gay Games] is to foment even more the creation of other teams in Brazil. What we are doing here is so that in Brazil we motivate more and more the creation of people to occupy this space where until now gays were excluded. I think that gays discovered that we can play soccer because there were various *boleros* (gay men) that played in the closet. So when the guys discover they can play as themselves without having to put on a mask... teams start popping up in Rio, in São Paulo in Porto Alegre, Belo Horizonte, *em fim*, in all of Brazil"

[77] Two high-profile examples are the 2018 assassination of queer lawmaker Marielle Franco and subsequent exile of Jean Wyllys, another openly gay representative who left the country after received relentless death threats.

But where and with whom do queer athletes play and does that matter? If they form separate spaces, are they reaffirming a heterosexual/homosexual binary rather than exposing the constructedness of these categories (Butler 1993)? And if they exist as alternative (Wellard 85, 2006) and amateur teams, how are they both changed and/or able to make change in professional worlds?

Amateur football is today not taken as seriously as the professional leagues, but this has not always been the case in Brazil. The discursive framing of Braga as "the Brazilian footballer that never was" communicates that his playing for the BeesCats does not qualify him as a footballer, presumably because he does not get paid for it, as he would in professional teams. The phrasing exposes the relative weight of professional as compared to amateur sport. What, then, would having more professional futebolistas come out as gay accomplish? The Globo reporter wonders whether it would "help or hurt" for players currently playing professionally to assert a gay identity. Braga responds:

> "I think it would help *a lot*, a lot, a lot. I'm unable to perceive [how] sexuality [relates] to ability to play, competitivity. And it's sad because we come from the *submundo* (underworld), understanding many people quit/stopped playing years ago, kids (boys) who didn't have anything in life, but they had sport. Eh, this, their dream dies in relation to this question [of being gay]. And I think that our country, with all the professional issues we have in futebol, all the ways we've grown, I think it's time to change. I think it's time for business, because I think there's also the issue of the brands understanding, this would never influence the passion, the *rendimento* (performance) of the person. I think this would be great to gain the joy of this independence. You take a little step, it's starting. I think these projects [gestures to the teammates] are starting to do this. But someone needs to write it. The story needs to be reconstructed, it needs to be told in a different way, told about us, too. It could be that in the country where we live, in the deadliest country for LGBT to have a gay athlete to hold up the flag and say, 'hey. I am who I am'. Yeah."

How do queer athletes adapt to their *futebol* dreams deferred?[78] In forming a sizable league of their own, the LiGay has created a safe space, for now. Stories like Braga's and teams like the BeesCats are part of small changes he sees happening. But regardless of whether LGBT athletes are influencing the mainstream in ways that are tangible, they are undeniably chipping away at the *macho* veneer surrounding futebol.[79] Braga is part of the proverbial change he wishes to see in the world; his story has the power to reconstruct people's ideas about futebol and challenge the idea that it is a "straight" space. He proves that it is not, and his experience speaks to the power of the myth that it is.

Fifteen years after leaving professional football, Braga is playing again, and this time for the BeesCats. Still, he mourns the professional future that could have been: "It hurts, seeing my friends from back then still playing as professionals. It really does still hurt today" (Maybin and Baker 2019, 4). Braga is thrilled to be playing as an openly gay man in a league with other openly gay men. But his pain about not being able to play professionally highlights mixed feelings about mainstreaming versus separatism. There is a way that Braga and the BeesCats are able to call out the heterosexual hegemony of men's soccer because they were part of it and opted/were pushed out.

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[78] I echo here the opening line from "Harlem- A Dream Deferred" by Langston Hughes to stress the magnitude of the sacrifice that athletes make.

[79] Another instance of these little changes at work is a recent declaration against homophobia in futebol by the Fulminese Club of Rio (Pires 2019).

That outlets like the BBC pick up Braga's story and frame it as tragic exemplifies a point J. Halberstam makes when reading Tracy Moffatt's "Forth Place" series (Halberstam 2011, 93), which I also discuss in chapter two. Drawing on images Moffatt captured of Olympians (at the Sydney Games, 2000) who placed fourth right at their moment of defeat, Halberstam offers an illustration of the richness, mess, and ultimately the beauty of failing. The drama of Moffatt's photographs stem from the agony of fourth place, just out of reach of "top three", medal-winning recognition. A fourth-place athlete has usually worked just as hard as those who placed above them but have ultimately come up short. Nanoseconds mark the chasm between fame and oblivion. Her images seem to ask: is it worse to be at the Olympic level and get fourth than to not be in the Olympics at all? Compared to the MBB, who are a long way away from the professional "gold standard" of the Olympics, Braga's story resonates more closely with Moffatt's art. Braga's trajectory can be seen as failing queerly, and in a literal sense: he had a real shot at the dream of futebol fame, but he failed to secure it because of his queerness. His having to choose between professional futebol and being out as a gay man places him in a kind of "fourth place."

At the same time, the existence of players like Braga belies the notion that men's futebol is a strictly heterosexual space. Even if they have not been out, the sport has had gay players. The repeated incantation that futebol is homophobic serves, in part, to mask its latent queerness. The speed with which the LiGay expanded (600% in one year) suggests that there are a large number of soccer players who identify as queer. Braga's reentry into soccer is made possible because of the LiGay's formation and its attempts to win over Brazilian audiences. Soccer has ubiquitous

appeal for cis male Brazilians and there are many players like Braga who kicked back into action when the opportunity of playing in a gay league arose. It is this momentum that explains how the BeesCats become the first football team from Brazil to compete in the Gay Games within only a year after their founding.

"What's Gay About the Way You Play?": The BeesCats' Performances of Gender and Sexuality at the GG2018

Olha os BeesCats	*Look at the BeesCats!*
Assanhadinhos	*Feeling themselves.*
Que só quer boys, só quer boys, só que boys, boys, boys.	*They just want boys, just want boys, just want boys, boys, boys.*
Vem pro Gay Games	*They came to the Gay Games*
Buscar o ouro	*to get the gold*
E dar close em Paris	*and be fancy in Paris*

-BeesCats GG10 anthem, translation by Fresh Life.

Sung to the tune of "Ciao Bella", the BeesCats anthem highlights key features of this cis-gay men's soccer team's participation in the 2018 Gay Games and it also speaks to (sings to!) the tensions in the larger story of LGBT+ sport. The anthem introduces the team as one who wants to be looked at. In this designated LGBT+ setting, the BeesCats are out and proud as men who desire other men. They went to the Gay Games, in part because they were held in the city of Paris, and they hoped to win.[80]

The anthem is immortalized in an episode about the Games created by Fresh Life, a group of YouTubers who accompanied the BeesCats to Paris (Fresh Life 2019). Fresh Life is a lifestyle channel run by three cis gay men who are also fitness

[80] Although, as we saw in previous sections, this was not the primary goal.

coaches: two Brazilians, João and Marcos, and one U.S. American, Cory. Together with a Brazilian film crew, they attend and produce videos about various gay events around the world, and they followed the BeesCats during the GG10. On the first day, they filmed a ten-minute segment where the two Brazilian YouTubers facilitated a conversation with the team about gay cis male identity, sex, and soccer. Their intimate questions differed from Globo's reporting style, which is set for a mainstream Brazilian audience. Taken together, these interviews provide insight into how the players switched codes when representing cis gay masculinities for a queer audience.

> João: So, in Brazil especially, futebol is understood as a pretty masculine sport, right? That said, can we say that all the players are active? Or at least leaning towards the active?[81]
> *Chorus of "nãããõoooo!!!" by all, followed by laughter*
> P1[82]: I don't think a guy being active or passive has anything to do with being masculine or being more feminine. I've hooked up with lots of effeminate men who were active and lots of masculine guys who were passive.
> *Then the team makes a joking reference to a very manly player who is also "sweet"*
> P2: And another thing, in modern soccer you have to know how to play all the positions, right?
> *More laughter and applause from the team*
> João: So what he's saying is we have to be versatile, right? So can we say that the BeesCats are a versatile team?
> All: Yeeeeaaaaahhhh!
> Marcos: I have another question. I want to know in your opinion, what is the gayest part of futebol?
> Someone shouts: The ass! [laughs]
> P1: It's the celebration in the stands! Have you ever seen how hetero fans celebrate a goal? They hug, kiss, I think that's the gayest part, when their team scores a goal and the hetero fans celebrate.

[81] "Active" here is intended to signal sexual positions.

[82] P1, 2, 3… represent the voices of different players. I have used these monikers to maintain anonymity.

P3: The gayest part is the lock room.
Marcos: What *are* locker rooms for gay teams like?
P4: They are the same as hetero locker rooms, but we feel a little more free [in gay ones]. Straight guys joke about each other's sizes, etc.
Someone says, "and we already know each other's" … laughter…
P4: No but really, it's because we are a family.
P5: Yeah people think just because it's gay soccer we fuck in the locker room… it's not like that.
P1: Ok but seeing how folks in gay soccer joke more, the playing is lighter (less serious, *mas leve*), so by the time we get to the locker room we don't have that *tesão* (arousal). Whoever wants to *pegar* (fool around) doesn't have to wait until the locker room, it's not a buildup to the locker room.
Marcos: What made you interested in football? I, for example, only like soccer to look at the guy's legs...
P6: I've loved playing since I was a kid, but when the opportunity came about to play with people like me. With hetero teams you can never open up all the way, you have to maintain that line, so when you have a chance to play with a team where everyone is gay, you can be yourself.
P2: We all have that story of playing since we were kids.
P1: I think the next generations will be different they will not be the only gay ones on their team.

The playful style of this interview with Fresh Life, compared to the BeesCats' interactions with other media outlets, makes clear the kind of code switching these athletes employ. They are much more playful and suggestive in this exchange because they are aware of the audience they will reach. This is an example of the fielding strategies that athletes develop to navigate the worlds of futebol: they strategically choose, within limits, desired forms of visibility. Shifts in tone and content—by both the interviewer and interviewee—characterize the interviews between FreshLife and Globo. The interview with FreshLife, for instance, is the only one I saw openly discussing sex. The conversation I witnessed, interestingly, did not make the final cut of the FreshLife channel show on BeesCats.

The only exchange to make it to the YouTube-worthy cut is one between João and a player named Douglas Batista that took place after the interaction described above, when the rest of the futebolistas had wandered off.

> João: Douglas, you are an example of how prejudice has effects on sports. Can you tell us how?
> Batista: There is an episode in which we were in the semi-final in São Paulo and I was one of the main players of the straight team. [Text on screen reads: He was **out of the closet** by this time]. The game was very hard, it was 0-0 most of the time. There was a fault, and I kicked the penalty against the other team in the final 2 minutes of the second half, and I scored. So 1-0 for us. We won. In this moment all what you want is to receive praise for your accomplishment. And then when I got in the changing room, people started to cover themselves and leave because my presence was making them uncomfortable. So that day I got really sad because it doesn't matter what you do on the field even if you were responsible for winning and qualifying the team for the finals. What matters for them is your sexual orientation and the embarrassment you make other people feel. That day I was very sad. I confess, I cried. *Faz parte*. But after that, I got even stronger. That made me feel motivated to show the whole world that there are gays who play soccer and who play at a high level and this is what the BeesCats team is doing here at the Gay Games.

These are the moments that mark futebol as a heteronormative space, and that define a split between the mainstream and the openly gay leagues. In Batista's experience, the discomfort of non-gay identified players around openly gay ones superecedes any chance of gay athletes' full acceptance as teammates by their heterosexual counterparts. His story also suggests the limits of attempts to make change in the visible spaces of the field; playing well or *justo* may not address the roots of homophobia that reveal themselves in less visible places. Is fielding possible, for instance, in the sexualized space of the locker room?

Locker rooms are places where people get naked together and shower. Full of sexual tension, they are the setting for countless pornographic films. As in the expression "locker room talk", they are also famed as territories where explicit and

sexual conversation happens. Sports writers and gay cis male athletes Jim Buzinski and Cyd Zeigler Jr. suggest that there are three main reasons for sexual contact in the locker room: horseplay, hazing, and genuine sexual interest (2007, 141). They speculate that the fear gay men inspire in supposedly heterosexual men has to do with the perceived disruption of the norms around contact. Does the meaning of horseplay change when slapping a teammates' ass has sexual intent? What if hazing in the form of forced contact is a manifestation of repressed homosexual desire? What if a gay athlete loses control or what if he is in the locker room and the assumed-to-be-straight athlete likes this? These are the irrational anxieties behind the fact that for most heterosexual-identified athletes, their number one issue with having a gay teammate is having to exist together in the locker room (Buzinski and Zeigler 2007, 145). Because of the homophobia that condenses around this space, nearly every queer sportsperson has a horror story about the locker room. Such stories—from queer and non-queer athletes alike—contribute to the lore of futebol's heteronormativity.

Beyond the locker room, what does the repeated incantation of soccer being homophobic and machista do? Each of the FreshLife producers restates in some way that Brazilian soccer is inhospitable to gay futebolistas. For instance, João says: "the BeesCats have been changing soccer in Brazil where the sport is so important, but at the same time so homophobic"; Cory says "After going to Brazil many times and getting to know the Brazilian culture, I understand a little how machismo and prejudice work in the country"; Marcos says: "I am really happy and proud of them, getting so far coming from this culture where being Gay and playing soccer doesn't match." Then, the U.S. born YouTuber, Cory, shares his thoughts:

> "It does not make sense to me that there is such discrimination, because gays are just as capable and **often more masculine** than hetero men themselves. After all **we are talking about Brazilians**. If there is any other nation [laughs] where the gays are more masculine than they are in Brazil. I do not know. And I do not want to know. Muah"

Then Cory folds his thumb and fingers together, kissing at them, before splaying his fingers into the air like a chef, as if to say 'delicious'. He laughs. In this case, or for this particular media framing, the repeated incantation of Brazilian futebol's homophobia seems to push a counter message that Brazilian men are, in fact, *more* macho.[83]

Corey's statement—"after all we are talking about Brazilians"—also speaks to the particular racialized sexualities of Brazilians, especially in the eyes of foreigners. For an interpretation of Corey's quote I turn to anthropologist Greg Mitchell. Focusing on interactions between cis gay North American consumers and cis male Brazilian sex workers, Mitchell observes "how these men from different cultures and perspectives understand one another and their erotic relationships across the span of racial, cultural, and sexual difference" (2016, 3). Specifically, Mitchell notes that for tourists, Brazilian men's "…'exotic' Latin character is part of their allure, and this is built into popular discourses about the hypersexuality of men of color and the perception of Brazilian sexual excesses that circulates in the media through endless

[83] In my opinion Cory's quote says more about Cory (who he is and what he sees) than it speaks to any inherent truth. I, for instance, see the BeesCats as sweet, kind, and feminist (and I do NOT read them as excessively macho). But maybe this interpretation, too, says more about my interpretive location than it does about any "truth" of gender performance.

depictions of bacchanalian carnival celebrations and Brazil's prolific porn industry" (2016, 37).

Mitchell's analysis is relevant in the GG setting, too; while it is no secret that sex tourism is a prominent feature of megaevents like the World Cup and the Olympics, many participants in the Gay Games also engage in sex tourism. In fact, drawing from ethnographic research at both the Gay Games and the OutGames in 2010, Wagner Xavier de Camargo asserts that these events are, for many, "another stage in a 'circuit' of parties and sex" (Camargo and Rial 2011, 986). Indeed, at one party I attended, I met a Brazilian porn star (with a similar look as the model in Figure 3), who told me he was at the Games "to find rich, blue-eyed, European men". The seduction can go both ways. Whether or not the BeesCats were motivated by the prospect of sexual exchange, I wonder about the extent to which they are lumped together with Brazilian sex workers by the mostly North American and European men who are at the Games looking for sex.

FIG 3.3: Facebook post from the Brazilian delegation, *Espírito Brasil*, advertising a Brazilian party at the Gay Games Paris 2018 (posted August 9, 2018).

Indeed, although I did not see the BeesCats interact directly with many footballers from other teams, players from different teams most definitely exhibited interested in the Brazilian side. At every game, gay male footballers from other teams (who were, with the exception of Mexico, almost exclusively white Anglo or European) milled around to watch them play. In the words of an athlete from the U.K., who stood chatting with me on the sidelines as the BeesCats played: "they sure are fun to watch. They're incredible footballers, and, you know, they're bloody gorgeous". Besides the allure of their soccer abilities and looks, the BeesCats had great fun during the intervals when they were off the field.[84] They had a boom box with them wherever they went, and during breaks they would play music, mostly *funk*, and dance along to it, *rebolando* (loosely translated as gyrating and twerking) as other athletes looked on in pleasure and excitement.

If the BeesCats themselves engaged in sexual adventures, they did not talk about it with me. Four of the teams' players were at the Games with long-term partners.[85] I did not see the BeesCats at any of the parties I attended (where a lot of

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[84] To get an idea of what their dancing and partying looked like see: https://twitter.com/DCHomos/status/1062554946120364033
This clip is of a team from the LiGay, and was retweeted by @DCHomo with the words "what sport is this and how do I sign up?" I include it here to illustrate what I mean and to point to the sort of attention the BeesCats attracted in Paris.

[85] That's not to say they did not enjoy sex with other people, and in fact, Camargo's work suggests many couples come to the GG to find a "third", an invited guest to

the hooking up happens) and when they invited me to hang out, it was to do cultural activities in the city, such as taking pictures in front of the Eiffel Tower. Before me, the BeesCats presented themselves as there to play soccer. It was clear that the goals of competing in the Gay Games varied by nation, by team, by athlete.

The playful tone of the BeesCats when they were relaxing between games or speaking with Fresh Life was different from the posture they assumed when speaking with a local correspondent from Globo. On the first day of competition (8-05-2018), I observed the Globo journalist interview three players—André, Douglas B., and Vitor. The footage Globo took never made it to live television, but the questions and responses of interviews with Brazil's biggest media corporation offer insight into the codeswitching that happens between gay-targeted vs "mainstream" medias. There was one question I found particularly interesting:

> Reporter: What's gay about games like this? Like, I'm watching the game, what's gay about it?
> André: I think what's gay is the friendship afterwards, because heteros (*o hetero)* have that posture that I'm facing the enemy. Gays (*o gay*) are playing, we are playing a game and we don't crush our challenges (*não tira um pe*), we win the game but we don't have to dominate. We are more loyal (*leal*). The difference between gay futebol and traditional is loyalty. We have a rule, between us it's like this. If there's a chance to inflict hurt, I'm not going to do it, we don't have *malandragem* (malicious intent). While in *futebol de várzea* (street or pickup soccer), everyone is beating each other up. Not in ours [gay teams]. So I think what's gay is that: friendship, loyalty.
> Reporter: Do you show out (*da pinta*)?
> André: We do, we celebrate! We exaggerate because that keeps it light. We don't have that macho pose that "I don't like sexuality". No, we keep it light, like everything in life should be.

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have a threesome with their regular partner (985). I share this only to note that 1/3 of the team did not come single.

When speaking with the reporter from Globo, Machado returns to his points about gay futebol as more ethical and less corrupt. Compared to the ways the BeesCats speak with one another and with Fresh Life, when they are being interviewed by mainstream media their comportment is contained (like that of the reporter who is doing the interviewing) and their message shifts. Codeswitching between environments, the BeesCats engage in fielding, speaking to the parts of their athleticism that makes their LiGay acceptable.

Conclusions: Fielding Futebol

I call the BeesCats' efforts to make queer practices more acceptable in heteronormative spaces *fielding* futebol. Fielding is a tactic I observed LGBT+ futebolistas employ as they navigate heteronormative binaries enforced in traditional futebol. In a literal sense, fielding describes the defensive plays made in soccer. Used as an analogy, fielding describes the adaptive ways athletes maneuver the charged minefields that gather around their being and playing. Fielding involves juggling the performance of multiple identities—including nation, gender, sexuality, race and ability—on and off the field, although the performances can be different on and off the field and for different audiences. It necessarily incorporates their bodies, since the athletic body is on display.

The BeesCats' comportment at the Gay Games, the LiGay's stance on fair play, and Braga's experiences navigating professional futebol each exemplify different kinds of fielding. At the GG final against the Parisian side, the BeesCats position their bodies in the way of violence in order to diffuse the violence. This act of quiet defiance may not be radical, but it is an adjustment with queer implications in

that they are embodying a non-normative stance. Through the LiGay's ethics of fair play, which is a platform GG founder Tom Waddell also advocated, the Brazilian league appropriates morality. Here, they field the charge that they are immoral by proclaiming their virtue. Theirs is a pitch for acceptance, as made evident in Machado's statements about gay athletes winning over traditional teams through their clean and just behaviors on the field. On the other hand for Braga, fielding, or adapting, meant playing in an exclusively gay men's league in the hopes that this league will eventually open space for out male athletes to compete in professional Brazilian futebol. Even though sexuality need not impact the way futebolistas actually play, mainstream futebol is experienced as inhospitable to gay athletes. For Braga to be accepted, then, he felt he had to leave the professional track.

My use of fielding as a term draws inspiration from queer Latinx theorist José Muñoz's disidentifications (1999), a term that describes queer strategies for working within and without dominant systems. While Muñoz speaks to and draws examples from the negotiations that take place in the performance art of queers-of-color, my deployment of *fielding* uses a sporting term to also apply more directly the sporting arena where bodies are on full display. Embodiment is part of how any marginalized subject maneuvers, but even more so in futebol, which is an embodied activity as it is played and watched. Fielding is a performance, of sorts, although it is usually improvised and always interactive. In other words, it depends on multiple actor-athletes playing-performing together. Just as speakers fielding questions get tripped up, or goalies fielding balls miss, athletes do not always "get it right". Their queer politics are not always perfect. And yet, fielding exposes the possibilities and limits

of queering futebol.

If fielding characterizes the way LGBT+ athletes adjust their behavior in heteronormative spaces, then the BeesCats comportment in queer spaces provides a counterpoint. Gay spaces certainly have their own set of disciplinary rules, so I am not indicating any one way of being as more authentic than another. What I observe is that the way the Brazilian side performs gender and sexuality at the GG10 in Paris is a point of contrast that illuminates the ways these athletes make themselves more acceptable to heteronormative audiences.

The position on the soccer field that best exemplifies fielding is the goalie. Goalkeeping is a defensive position. In a sense, so too is queering, because the queer is always working in relation to the (hetero)norm. The keeper is mostly confined to a space called the penalty box; compared to other players, the position is immobile. Similarly, queer athletes have made their space onto the pitch, but they still play at the margins. They are kept out of the games' action in a larger sense because their participation is restricted. LGBT+ futebolistas are limited by binary rules and by the societal agreement that futebol is a misogynist and homophobic space. For this reason, the fielding of queer athletes is in many ways, adaptive. Like the fielding of the LiGay, the work of the goalie is mostly incremental as they position their bodies in small movements to try to be in the right place at just the right time. Philosopher Edward Winters writes that the "keeper's job is to frustrate" (Winters qtd in DuBoise 2018, 24). They are the killjoy, the stopper of goals. Likewise, queer players upset futebol's status-quo because they expose the powerful myth of the national sport's

heteromasculinity. By the mere fact of their presence, athletes like the members of the BeesCats erode the assumption that futebol is exclusively heterosexual.

Conclusion:

Playing for the Right Team in the Era of "Gender Ideology"

Photo Credit: Chris Kleponis-Pool/Getty Images
Schreckinger, Ben. 2019. "Right-Wing Movements Merge as Bolsonaro Visits Trump." *Politico*, March 19, 2019. https://www.politico.com/story/2019/03/19/bolsonaro-brazil-trump-visit-1227573.

When the commanders-in-chief Jair Bolsonaro and Donald J. Trump met on March 19, 2019, they exchanged soccer jerseys as official 'gifts of state.' Trump began the meeting "Before we begin… You know Brazil is a great great soccer power and a great country. You know all about Brazil being the great soccer power...You've had a fantastic soccer history", which he said before handing Brazil's President a U.S. men's soccer jersey tagged with the random number 19 and the name Bolsonaro. Bolsonaro then gave the U.S. President a Brazilian national soccer jersey, number 10, "representing the world's best soccer player ever, Edson Arantes do Nascimento

(Pelé), who gave us so much joy". The invocation of soccer during this first official visit between the current heads of state from both nations signals the lasting associations between Brazil and futebol. Just as the Presidents of Brazil and the United States in 2019 understand futebol as a masculine undertaking, so too did the political leaders during the early periods of Brazil's nation formation; the history of futebol as a vehicle for the social construction of race, gender and class dates back to the late nineteenth century. In 2019, Trump's and Bolsonaro's use of the men's jersey points to how the national sport, like national politics, remains largely articulated along masculine lines.

This articulation is part of a larger right-wing nationalist doctrine to maintain a binary configuration of gender. Such configurations define women and men in opposition and confine them within certain traditional roles. Bolsonaro underscored this point during other parts of his visit, as well. During a public press conference in the White House Rose Garden, the same day the Presidents exchanged football jerseys, Bolsonaro stated:

> "I say that Brazil and the United States stand side by side in their efforts to ensure liberties and respect to traditional family lifestyles, respect to God, our Creator, against the gender ideology or the politically correct attitudes, and against fake news"
> (Madajain 2019).

Insofar as family stands in for and reproduces nation, such nationalist appeals for family are calls to maintain a binary gendered logic that takes shape in nuclear and heteronormative understandings of family (McClintock 1993). According to this philosophy, to question gender norms is to disrupt the traditional family. To disrupt the traditional family is to destabilize the nation. The jersey exchange, combined with this public declaration evoking the language of traditional family and "gender

ideology," suggests that maintaining Brazilian futebol's hegemonic masculinity is part of a conservative platform to reify conventional gender roles.

The term "gender ideology," as Bolsonaro used it, generally refers to policies that advance the rights of women and LGBT+ people as a conspiracy to undermine family values and promote immorality. While "gender ideology" as used in such contexts does not have a coherent definition, the religious right and conservative ideologues began to circulate this term in the late 1990s to discredit movements for gender equality (Assis and Ogando 2018). Recently it took shape as an attack on Judith Butler, when she was in São Paulo for a conference on *Democracy in the Americas* and to launch the Portuguese translation of two of her books: one on Zionism and another on the *Psychic Life of Power*. Protesters circulated a petition, signed by 370,000 people, that called Butler a threat to "the natural order of gender, sexuality and the family" ("Judith Butler Attacked in Brazil" 2018). The day of her launching (November 6, 2017), anti-Butler protesters burned an effigy portraying the philosopher as a witch (Cyfer 2018). The fear of gender equality that Butler represents is undergirded by a panic that a disturbance in gendered order is parallel to a disruption in the larger social order.

This association has power across political lines: former President of the left-wing Worker's Party Dilma Rousseff issued the culturally conservative *Carta ao povo de Deus* (Letter to Godly people) as part of her campaign in 2010. The letter is an attempt by Rousseff and the PT (*Partido dos Trabalhadores*, or Workers Party) to woo Evangelical Christian voters by appealing to their shared family values. "The family is a bulwark [that ensures] a healthy society. The less structured family life is,

the more chaotic society becomes" (Sosa 2019, 730). Given the profound unease around gender disorder across a political spectrum, those who attempt to queer the gender binary face an uphill battle.

In this context, to what extent can women and LGBT+ futebolistas both assimilate *and* call into question the gendered status quo? *Which Team Do You Play For?* illustrates the dilemmas athletes face as they navigate this apparent double-bind. In chapter three, I show how footballers in the LiGay assume a moral stance against the conservative claims that link homosexuality and immorality. By insisting on fair play, they seek acceptance by way of the national sport at the same time as they demand access to it. Because the BeesCats oppose an aggressive, winner-take-all-at-all-costs stance that is often associated with mainstream futebol masculino, they are also potentially queering the sport. The sheer number of teams in the LiGay (over forty-two as of 2018), as well as stories like that of Douglas Braga, evince a growing and visible movement of openly gay futebolistas. This movement exposes the proclaimed heteromasculinity of futebol as a farce.

Still, the BeesCats understand what the rightward turn in Brazilian politics means for them and for their cause. At a 2019 LiGay championship, that took place shortly after Bolsonaro's election, BeesCats founder and championship organizer, André Machado, shared that he "is so sad with the election of Bolsonaro," a man who declares himself a "proud homophobe." This hateful language - which conservatives began using during the 2010 Presidential election - has emboldened bigots to act violently. In 2017, 445 LGBT+ identified Brazilians were murdered, a 30% rise from

the previous year, according to watchdog Grupo Gay da Bahia (Cowie 2018).[86] But, Machado continued, he thinks "the resistance will grow a lot in the next few years" with the LiGay as part of the resistance (Maybin and Baker 2019). To the extent that the national sport is able to accommodate new ways of being a futebolista, the BeesCats' integrative goals need not be undermined by the divisive rhetoric coming from the executive office. Seeking national belonging via futebol does not mean players assume an apolitical stance, although political context does shift what assimilation might look like.

The *Meninos Bons de Bola,* whom I describe in chapter two, also stand in resistance to the rise in anti-LGBT+ violence and to the war against "gender ideology." As a population vulnerable in many ways--not only in terms of gender but also in terms of race, class and ability--they are especially alarmed about the anti-gender rhetoric coming from the new government. Of particular concern is a possible change in their ability to access gender affirming care through the public health care system. This worry, however, does not seem to have dampened their desire to be seen. It has, perhaps, shifted how they go about seeking visibility. For instance, while many *meninos* are no longer willing to give interviews, they continue to be active on their own social media pages and are even organizing to compete against a trans men's soccer team in Rio (whose creation was inspired by the MBB), set to take place on June 20, 2019 ("Amistoso da Resistência" 2019).

[86] In response to this spike in violence, in May 2019 Brazil's highest Court extended anti-discrimination laws to protect LGBT+ people (Lopes 2019).

It is uncertain how the MBB will change as the team members' gender coheres to more conventional masculine standards. How will their politics shift, if at all, as their playing style "adjusts" to the more aggressive, established norms that were discussed during our focus group session on July 2018? While they may win over fans "whether they win or lose," as their anthem boasts, if winning might increase their chances of securing sponsorship, would they change their tune? Does the pressure of an empowered conservative regime compound the disciplinary pressures of futebol? Or, now that mainstream "acceptance" is clearly off the table, does this open new, radical spaces at the margins? Ultimately, following the continued struggles of the MBB presents fascinating questions about transing and queering futebol, and about the relationship between institutions and individuals.

Ongoing changes in *futebol feminino*, which I describe in chapter 1, also introduce new questions. As the Brazilian seleção feminina competes in the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup, it has been forty years since the prohibition against women's soccer was overturned; the same number of years as the ban. During this year's WWC, Brazilian futebolistas are receiving unprecedented recognition in their home country, aided by the first-ever television broadcast of the WWC in Brazil by Globo TV. In the opening game against Jamaica, 19.7 million viewers in Brazil tuned in to watch the women's team; it was "the second largest domestic audience for a single match in Women's World Cup history, after the United States drew 25 million viewers for the 2015 final" (Gulino 2019). The popularity of the 2019 WWC signals a significant tide change.

Institutional barriers remain, and the recognition of futebol feminino has most certainly not been met with meaningful, equitable redistribution as Brenda Elsey reminds us (Elsey 2019). There are causes for hope that women will do things differently, as they fight in unity. From the gender discrimination lawsuit that twenty-eight players from the U.S. women's national team brought against the U.S. soccer federation (Das 2019), to the union that Chile's national women's team formed (*Asociación Nacional Jugadores de Fútbol Feminil en Chile)* to confront neglect and discrimination by the national organizing body (Pujol 2019), women footballers understand their struggle as part of a larger fight for justice. There are many reasons to cheer this sort of collective and feminist queering.

As my first chapter shows, there are also reasons to remain critical of the changes in *futebol feminino.* Namely, as the sport moves out of the margins, the gender presentation of women players becomes increasingly controlled by marketers, club owners, and possibly even teammates and fans. It may seem trivial to some to care about feminizing pressures such as whether players lengthen and straighten their hair or wear makeup. Indeed, these issues are not as urgent as the poverty women athletes face. However, as chapter one demonstrates, such aesthetic forms of coercion have eugenic and classist undertones, in addition to gendered ones, that have resulted in the exclusion of queer women and Afro-Brazilian athletes. Furthermore, feminizing futebol reifies a gender binary, which is one of the root causes of women's oppression in the first place. Inclusion for some futebolistas, who are feminine presenting and lighter skinned, must not come at the exclusion of other women who defy these norms.

Which Team Do You Play For? tells the story of how in the *país de futebol*, women and LGBT+ folks have historically been excluded from this national form of belonging. Their desires for assimilation via the national sport are part of deeper struggles for acceptance. Given futebol's masculinist hegemony, there are ways that marginalized athletes adapt and conform to normative standards. And yet, the presence and activism of women and LGBT+ footballers also challenge such standards. In effect, by articulating their demands for recognition in and through the national sport, the athletes described in this dissertation are queering futebol and subverting gender ordering.

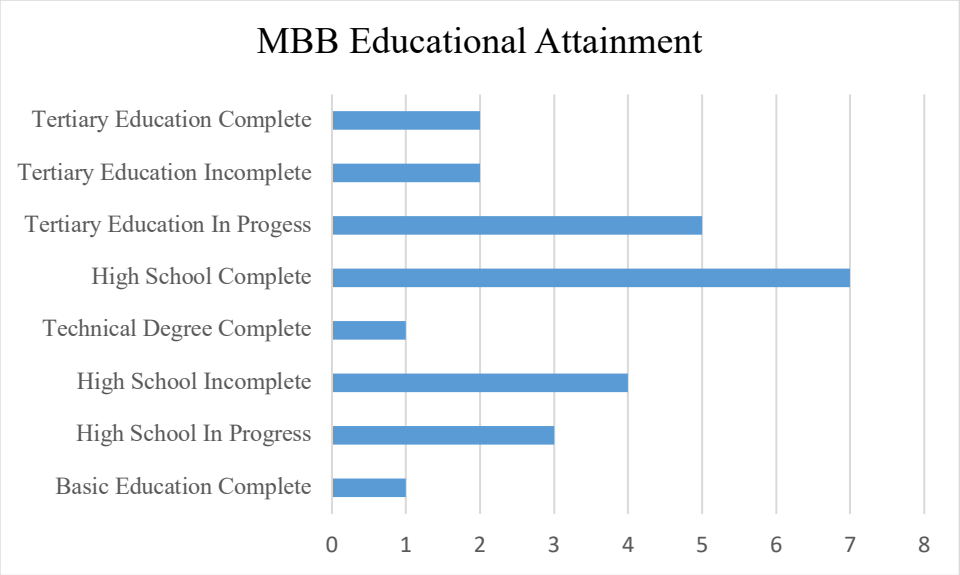
Appendices

Appendix 1: MBB Survey Questions (Created on November 18, 2018)

Number	Question (Portuguese)	Question (English)
1	Username	Username/Email
2	Nome Completo (Que consta no RG)	Full name (as listed on your official ID)
3	Nome Social (Se ainda não mudou no RG)	Social/Chosen Name (if you have not had your name officially changed
4	Número para Contato	Phone Number
5	Data de Nascimento	Date of Birth
6	CPF	ID number (CPF is similar to a social security number, but much less secretive)
7	RG	Registration Number
8	Estado Civil	Civil/Marital Status
9	Foto Recente	Recent Photo
10	Apelido atrás da camisa do uniforme	Nickname on the back of your uniform
11	Número atrás da camisa do uniforme	Number on the back of your uniform
12	Mês e Ano que Ingressou no Time	Month and year of entry into team
13	Tem posição no time? Se sim, qual?	Do you have a position on the team? What is it?
14	Endereço	Address
15	Bairro	Neighborhood
16	CEP	Postal Code
17	Cidade Natal	City of Birth
18	Nível de Ensino	Level of Education

19	Profissão	Profession
20	Empresa onde trabalha	Place of work
21	Tem alguma doença? Se sim, qual?	Do you have any illness? If so, which?
22	Já faz tratamento hormonal?	Are you doing hormone therapy?
23	Já fez mastectomia?	Have you had a mastectomy?
24	Faz acompanhamento pelo SUS ou Particular?	Is your health care public (SUS) or private?

Appendix 2: MBB Educational Attainment



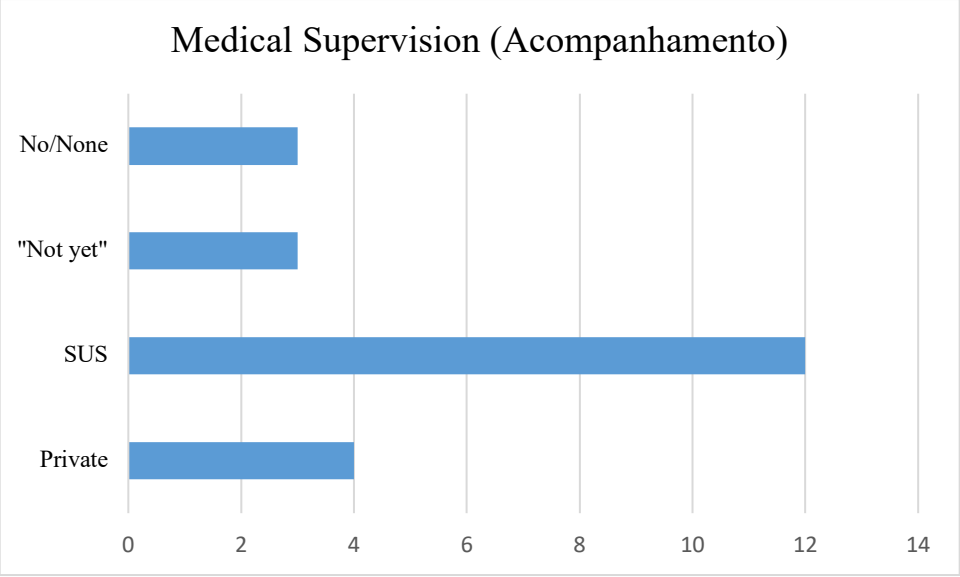
Appendix 3: MBB Employment

Key:
Unemployed or self-employed=yellow
Minimum wage job = blue
Salaried job with benefits = white

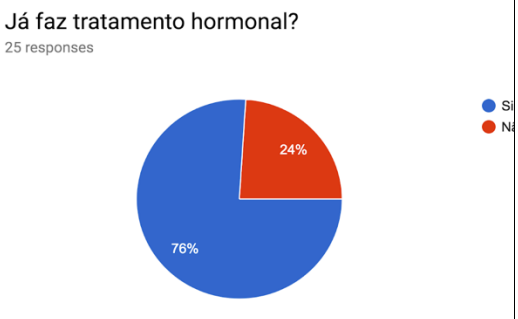
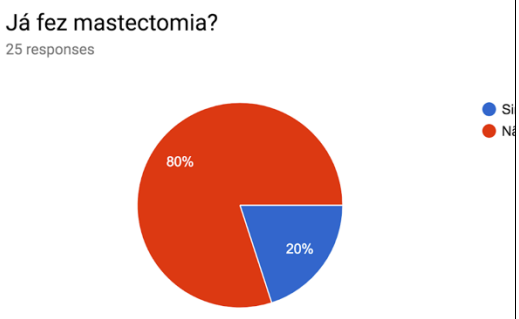
Profession	**Company where you work**
Sub Boss	*Cantina nobre* (Canteen)
Graphic Designer and Web Developer	*Desempregado.* (Unemployed)
Hairstylist, barber, vendor	*Drikamodas* (Beverage Company)
Barber	*Autonomo* (Autonomous)
Barber	*Men's Club Barber*
Manager	*Drinkao* (Beverage Company)
None	*Não tem* (I don't have one)
Cook	*Casa de Aprendizagem* (Training Center)
Maintenance	*Por conta própria* (Self-employed)
Actor	*Não trabalho* (I don't work)
Vendor	*Ecko unld*
Operational Agent	*Associação Evangélica Beneficente (ONG)*
None	*Nenhuma* (None)
Barber	*Barbearia Arthura* (self-employed barber)
Barber	*Oliver barber shop* (self-employed barber)
Young apprentice	*Fox Network Group*
Psychologist	*Cuide-Ser psicologia*
Socioeducative Adviser	*atualmente estou fora do mercado de trabalho* (Currently I am out of the job market)
Intern	*Universidade Cruzeiro do sul*
Server	*Harmburgaria* (Burger Joint)
Student	*Não trabalho.* (I don't work)
Philosophy teacher	*Governo do estado de SP*

Graphic Designer and Advertising	*Canoa Digital*
Socioeducative Adviser	*CRDC*
Repository [stocking]	*DIA BRASIL LTDA.* (Vendor)

Appendix 4: MBB Medical Care



Appendix 5: MBB History of Gender Affirming Care

	
"Have you ever done hormone therapy?"	Did you have a mastectomy?

Glossary

Portuguese	English
BeesCats Soccer Boys	A play on words. “Biscates só querem boys” means the little sluts only want boys.
Em fim	Ultimately
Futebóis	Soccer, plural.
Futebol	Soccer
Futebolista	Soccer player
Meninos Bons de Bola	The Soccer Star Boys (literal: the boys who are good at football)
País de futebol	Nation of soccer
Paulista	Refers to someone from the city of São Paulo.
Paulistana	Refers to someone from the state of São Paulo. In this case it was (and is) also used to refer to soccer. tournaments in the state of São Paulo.
Roda de coversa	Conversation circle.

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